

Peruvian officers under investigation over violence in protests

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National police crack down on a protest in Lima, Peru. (Photo: Twitter/ @enteratconlesly)

Lima, January 17 (RHC)-- Peru's Interior Ministry has begun an investigation against ten National Police officers for the "unnecessary and excessive" use of force during demonstrations against former Interim President Manuel Merino.

The officers, whose identities are kept secret, are investigated for firing tear gas canisters directly at the protesters' heads and upper bodies. Authorities revealed that the National Police also used prohibited projectiles such as glass marbles and lead shots to deter protests.

The investigation conducted by the Ministry's Internal Affairs Department could last another 50 days. The reports will be sent to the Police Headquarters, which will finally decide on the defendants.

In November, police brutality caused the death of two young protesters as about 200 people were injured. The social outrage arose after Merino took office to replace ousted President Martin Vizcarra.

Earlier this week, the United Nations urged current interim President Francisco Sagasti to investigate human rights violations against protesters. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, the police officers shot to the people's bodies "indiscriminately and at close range."

On February 15th, the Interior Ministry will present a reform to the National Police aimed to guarantee respect for the citizens' human rights.

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