

Peru Minister Says Police Should Use Lethal Force on Protesters



Lima, May 21 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Peruvian Interior Minister Jose Luis Perez Guadalupe said on Tuesday that police “can and should” use lethal force in the face of protests as those unfolding in the country against the *Tia Maria* mine project.

“When (police) go to these types of demonstrations, (police) who are on the front line carry non-lethal weapons, but in recognition of their duties and in the name of the protection of the citizenry, police of course can and should use their guns, this is not unusual,” said Perez.

Gen. Jorge Flores Goicochea, head of the Peruvian National Police, reiterated the comments made the interior minister, stating that there is a second line of police who are authorized to carry lethal weapons, which can be used “when there is an imminent risk to their lives.”

The Arequipa region of southern Peru has been rocked by months of protests and demonstrations against the Southern Copper Corporation's *Tia Maria* project. Locals fear the project will cause environmental damage and affect their ability to farm in the area. The project, along with several others throughout Peru, is backed by the Peruvian government of Ollanta Humala, which has opted to cater to transnational mining companies as a means to generate economic gains.

Since May 2013, the government has issued four separate sets of laws to make environmental and social standards flexible and favorable for extractive industries.

Violent clashes between demonstrators and police have resulted at least two recent civilian deaths and dozens more have been injured. A police officer also died as a result of injuries sustained during protests.

The government has sent in thousands of police and military to quell protests, which activists fear will only lead to more deaths. Southern Copper Corporation ordered a halt in their \$1.4 billion project for 60 days but that move proved insufficient for demonstrators. Protesters are adamant that they will not cease until the project is canceled, an outcome rejected outright by President Humala.

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