



The World Archaeological Congress

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MEDIA RELEASE

Push for Development in Peru Threatens Indigenous Cultures

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The World Archaeological Congress expresses its deep concern regarding recent clashes between government forces and Indigenous peoples protesting oil and gas exploitation on their lands in Peru.

These terrible events, which had a high toll on lives, occurred as the Peruvian government attempted to implement international economic accords for oil and gas production without the prior and informed consent of local Indigenous peoples.

The proposed developments threaten the territories, resources, lives, and autonomy of Indigenous communities. After receiving inadequate responses to their concerns, the local Indigenous populations resorted to actions such as road blockages, which resulted in violent confrontations with paramilitary forces.

The World Archaeological Congress regrets the loss of lives and calls on the Peruvian government to desist from further development attempts in this region and to immediately instigate new discussions with the Indigenous peoples involved.

‘The accusations of savagery that have been hurled at these native peoples only broadens an already huge cultural gap’, said Claire Smith, President of the World Archaeological Congress. ‘Such views derive from a poor understanding of Indigenous cultures and inadequate communication between governments and those whose lives and livelihoods are affected by development.’

The World Archaeological Congress supports the rights of Indigenous peoples to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development, particularly in relation to the economic and social programmes that affect them, including those relating to the exploitation of natural resources.

‘Indigenous people cannot be forced to support development when it infringes upon their fundamental rights’, said Dr Smith. ‘This type of approach inhibits development, even in those circumstances when Indigenous people may want this—and this is clearly not the case in this instance.’

‘This is a tragedy for the individual people, and yet another infringement on the cultural diversity of humanity, which is under threat throughout the world’, said Dr Smith.

The World Archaeological Congress calls upon the United States government to investigate how the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement may have influenced the actions of the Peruvian government in this instance.

The World Archaeological Congress draws attention to the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in September, 2007, and urges the Peruvian government to comply with internationally recognized principles regarding the rights of Indigenous peoples.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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BACKGROUND:

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is the only elected international body of practising archaeologists. WAC holds an international congress every four years to promote the exchange of the results of archaeological research; professional training and public education for disadvantaged nations, groups and communities; the empowerment and betterment of Indigenous groups and First Nations peoples; and the conservation of archaeological sites.