

**OPEN LETTER TO THE HEMISPHERE'S FOREIGN MINISTERS
MEETING AT THE 30TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE OAS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, JUNE 4-6, 2000, CONCERNING THE
IRREGULAR INTERRUPTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL
INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS IN PERU**

June 2, 2000

Honorable Foreign Ministers:

We write to you out of concern about the recent electoral process in Peru and our mutual desire to support and uphold democratic principles in the Americas.

Article 3 of the Charter of the Organization of American States recognizes that: "The solidarity of the American States and the high aims which are sought through it require the political organization of those States on the basis of the effective exercise of representative democracy...." This principle was reconfirmed in the "Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System" in 1991, in General Assembly Resolution 1080 and in the "Protocol of Washington." The Permanent Council of the OAS met in special session, on Wednesday, May 31, 2000, and referred the report by the Organization's Electoral Observation Mission in Peru for consideration at your meeting in Windsor, Canada, from June 4 to 6, 2000.

The international community, in general, and the OAS, in particular, expended significant resources and made important commitments to help ensure the integrity of Peruvian electoral process this year. In addition to the OAS Election Observer Mission, guided skillfully by Dr. Eduardo Stein, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and The Carter Center jointly organized a series of multinational delegations led by former presidents from the hemisphere to assess the electoral conditions, beginning in November 1999. The international community also supported the brave efforts of Peruvians to monitor their electoral process through the government's ombudsman's office, the *Defensoria del Pueblo*, the Peruvian civic organization *Transparencia*, and others.

A consensus has emerged among all of these impartial election monitoring groups that the Peruvian electoral process did not provide the people of Peru with a genuine democratic election, in part because of well-documented and gross media bias in favor of the incumbent president, lack of substantial media access for opposition candidates, and smear campaigns in the tabloid press against opposition candidates and Peruvian election observers. Observers also documented patterns of government resources being used for the electoral advantage of the incumbent president. The NDI/Carter Center mission concluded that the campaign was irreparably damaged and Peruvian voters had not received sufficient, accurate information about the candidates required in order to make an informed and free choice at the ballot box.

Additional concerns about the political climate and technical conditions for the runoff were not adequately addressed, so that, on May 25, NDI and The Carter Center concluded with regret that "an election on May 28 will not meet international standards for a credible,

democratic election." We therefore did not send an observation team to witness the May 28 electoral exercise in Peru, concurring with decisions by the OAS Election Observation Mission, the Defensoria del Pueblo, Transparencia and others not to act in a manner that might validate an illegitimate electoral process.

This was not a democratic election. Indeed, Peru's electoral events constitute a rupture in its democratic development which should be seen as an "irregular interruption of the democratic political institutional process" as noted in Resolution 1080. The government that is to emerge from the Peruvian electoral process therefore will lack a credible mandate reflecting the will of the people of Peru. The citizens of Peru deserve a genuine opportunity to exercise their right to democratic elections, and that opportunity has been denied to them.

As you gather in Windsor you have an important opportunity to take decisive action to preserve democracy in Peru. We respectfully suggest that you consider taking prompt action to: a) accept Dr. Stein's report on the OAS Electoral Observation Mission to Peru; b) resolve that these elections did not meet democratic standards; c) send a mission to Peru with a mandate to explore a consensual solution toward restoring electoral institutions and procedures that meet international standards.

[signed by:

Jimmy Carter, Former US President
Rodrigo Carazo Odio, Former Costa Rica President
L. Erskine Sandiford, Former Prime Minister of Barbados]

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