

# Political Violence and Political Prisoners in Contemporary Peru



On June 16, 1986, prisoners accused of belonging to the Peruvian Maoist guerrilla movement known as “Shining Path” organized a synchronized mutiny in three prisons in or near Lima (two for men and one for women), took a few hostages in each of them, and presented the authorities a 26-point petition. By the end of the day on June 19th, 1986, almost 250 political prisoners had been killed, in what constitutes the deadliest massacre of political prisoners in Latin American History.

How could this happen? How and why did a democratically elected government, whose leader had promised to be respectful of human rights in their efforts to put down

the Shining Path insurrections, opt for a military solution to a situation that could hardly be considered a threat to the security of the prisons, the government, or the internal order? The militarization of the prison crisis was the most tragic decision made by the government, but equally tragic was the fact that at no point during the unfolding of the events did the civilian or military authorities make any meaningful effort to prevent the massacre. This lecture attempts to elucidate the multiple factors that led to what Shining Path militants called (even before it happened) a “genocide,” and that came to be officially and euphemistically known as “los sucesos de los penales.” By looking at this specific and tragic event, this lecture will illuminate the historical context in which political violence erupted and developed in Peru between 1980 and 2000.

Carlos Aguirre is the author of three books and co-editor of four other volumes. He was a MacArthur Fellow at the University of Minnesota (1990-1996) and a Guggenheim Fellow in 1999-2000.



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- *The Criminals of Lima and their Worlds: The Prison Experience (1850-1935)* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003)

## ~COLLOQUIUM~

Friday, April 25, 2008

3:00 p.m. in Boyle 155, COCC Campus

Presented by **Dr. Carlos Aguirre**

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