SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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PERU: PRESIDENT GARCIA QUESTIONS EXISTENCE OF 'UNCONNECTED' TRIBES

Peru's President Garcia has questioned the existence of uncontacted tribes living in the remote Peruvian rainforest. The president's comments come just six weeks after 21 uncontacted Indians were photographed in south-east Peru, a sighting that made world headlines.

The comments were made in an article written by President Garcia in one of Peru's major national newspapers, El Comercio. The article argues that Peru must exploit more of its natural resources, citing the Amazon as the 'number one resource', but acknowledging his point of view is not shared by all.

'In opposition to oil, [environmentalists] have created the figure of an 'unconnected' Amazon native; that's to say, unknown but presumed to exist,' the president wrote. 'As a result, millions of hectares should not be explored, and Peruvian oil should be left underground while the cost of a barrel on the world market is $90.'

In total, there are an estimated 15 uncontacted tribes in Peru and a vast amount of evidence of their existence has been collected by Survival and other organisations over the years. Although any form of contact with them can be fatal, the Peruvian government is actively permitting and promoting oil exploration in areas they inhabit.

President Garcia's comments follow statements made earlier this year by the chairman of Perupetro, Peru's state oil company, that it is 'absurd to say there are uncontacted peoples', while another Perupetro spokesperson compared the tribes to the Loch Ness monster.

Survival's Director, Stephen Corry, said today, 'Perhaps the President didn't see the recent photos of 21 uncontacted Indians along the Piedras River, published on the front page of the very same newspaper he was writing in? This has nothing to do with 'creation' or 'presumption'. Their existence is undeniable. The President must cease playing this disingenuous game and recognise the rights of his most vulnerable citizens.'

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