

Peru Minister Says Eroded Enforcement Boosts Insecurity

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Peru's Interior minister blasted the country's public security efforts and said 90 percent of Peruvians do not feel safe, a sign the public is losing faith in the state's capacity to protect its citizens from criminal violence.

Speaking to Congress on August 22, Minister Carlos Basombrío said the country's security problem was rooted in the state's weakened response to violent crime, adding that for years [Peru](#) has suffered the highest victimization rates in Latin America, [reported El Comercio](#).

"The amount of cocaine produced in [Peru](#) is estimated at between 200 and 400 tons, yet we are only confiscating 10 tons per year," the minister said.

Basombrío's testimony came as investigators announced results of their probe into a group of police officers accused of orchestrating extrajudicial killings and claiming the victims had been killed in confrontations, all to gain accolades and promotions.

On August 22, Deputy Minister of Public Order Ismael Vargas Céspedes [revealed the findings of an investigative working group](#) that confirmed at least 9 police, including two higher ranking officers, were involved in executions of at least 20 civilians.

InSight Crime Analysis

Peruvian public perception of insecurity generally runs high compared with other South American nations, but it is unclear where Basombrío's statistic of 90 percent came from. In 2014, Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) [survey had 56.6 percent](#) of Peruvians reporting feelings of insecurity.

Peru's annual homicide rate of 7 per 100,000 inhabitants is relatively [low for the region](#), despite the country's role as South America's second biggest producer of the coca leaf and one of its biggest producers of cocaine. There are 16 other nations in Latin America and the Caribbean with higher homicide rates than [Peru](#).

Other types of crime reportedly have a bigger impact. [Kidnapping](#) rates in [Peru](#) were the highest in Latin America at 2.3 per 100,000 people in 2014, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)).

The production of cocaine and the illegal gold mining are both big business in [Peru](#). Illegal gold mining is estimated to be worth \$2.6 billion in exports, according to a report from The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime ([pdf](#)).

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The country has also seen a rise in the lynching of suspected criminals. Increasingly Peruvians have begun taking justice into their own hands due to feelings of insecurity and abandonment by the state. [The vigilante movement](#) has found widespread support among the population, even resulting in a social media movement called #CatchYourThief ([#ChapaTuChoro](#)).

As long as government institutions appear unable to curb organized crime or are even [complicit](#) in criminal acts, the disconnect between the government of [Peru](#) and its citizens will continue to widen.

