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PERU Charges against regional prosecutor dropped

CSW welcomed the news yesterday that Peruvian courts shelved the charges against Dr. Cristina Olazabal, a government prosecutor well known for her pursuit of perpetrators of human rights atrocities.

The charge of prevaricato, or violation of legal duty, was filed against Dr. Cristina Olázabal in January by the Attorney General of the Nation, Gladys Echaíz and related to a formal case Dr. Olázabal submitted as a provincial prosecutor for the region of Ayacucho. The suit named Peru's current President, Alan García, as ultimately responsible for a 1985 massacre carried out by government troops in the community of Accomarca. García was president at the time.

Dr. Olázabal is based in Ayacucho, the region hardest hit by the internal violence of the 1980s and 1990s, when government forces battled far left guerrilla groups, the Shining Path and the MRTA. Her work has led to the successful convictions of human rights violators from all sides of the conflict. She and her family have received repeated threats as a result of this.

This was not the first time that Dr. Olazabal was targeted because of her human rights work. Some years ago, Dr. Olazabal was demoted from her position as chief prosecutor in Ayacucho in what was widely viewed to be retaliation for investigating and prosecuting members of the military believed to be responsible for human rights atrocities.

Chief Executive of CSW, Mervyn Thomas, said: "We are relieved and pleased to hear that the Peruvian courts have dropped these false and politically motivated charges against Dr. Olazabal. We encourage the government to go a step further and give her and others doing similar work its full support in investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators of human rights atrocities committed by all actors in the armed conflict".

Notes to Editors:

-Dr. Olazabal has been directly responsible for the investigation and prosecution of such high profile cases as the Putis, Callqui and Lucanamarca massacres. She was also responsible for the exhumation and investigation of mass graves at Los Cabitos, in Ayacucho, where the remains of hundreds of the "disappeared" were uncovered.