

contains images some  
may find disturbing



## Death at Devil's Bend

An **eyewitness** account

Survival 

## 5 June 2009: Devil's Bend, Bagua, northern Peru

These photos were taken by Thomas Quirynen and Marijke Deleu, two Belgians working in Jaén, Peru. This is their eyewitness account of what happened on June 5th.

At 0600 on the morning of June 5th, Thomas and Marijke received a call in Jaén, warning them that police had started to clear the Indians' blockade on the section of the Fernando Belaunde Highway known as 'Devil's Bend', and that there were already casualties. They rushed to the scene, accompanied by two reporters from the TV station Frecuencia Latina:



Marijke and Thomas arrive at the bridge known as 'Corral Quemado'. The police stop their car, so they proceed by foot and motorbike-taxi to 'Devil's Bend'.



1. The first part of the blockade has already been cleared by police. Many people are fleeing into the hills, some are being detained, others are being shot.



2. A group of people gather around a wounded man, and call on the police to let them evacuate him. The police don't stop, but continue to advance.



3 & 4. Marijke and Thomas pass the police and arrive at the casualty, who is being taken away.







5

5. Moments later, police start to shoot again and fire tear gas grenades, prompting everyone to flee.



6

6. The police continue to advance, firing live rounds and tear gas. In the confusion, Marijke and Thomas are separated. A police officer points his riot gun at Marijke. She calls out, 'European, press, foreigner', but the police officer fires towards her. She is saved by an indigenous protester pulling her to the ground.



7

7. Police capture at least one Indian man.



8

8. They throw him to the ground and start to beat him, ignoring Marijke's efforts to get them to stop.



9

9. A police officer moves towards Marijke, Thomas and the reporters with weapon raised.



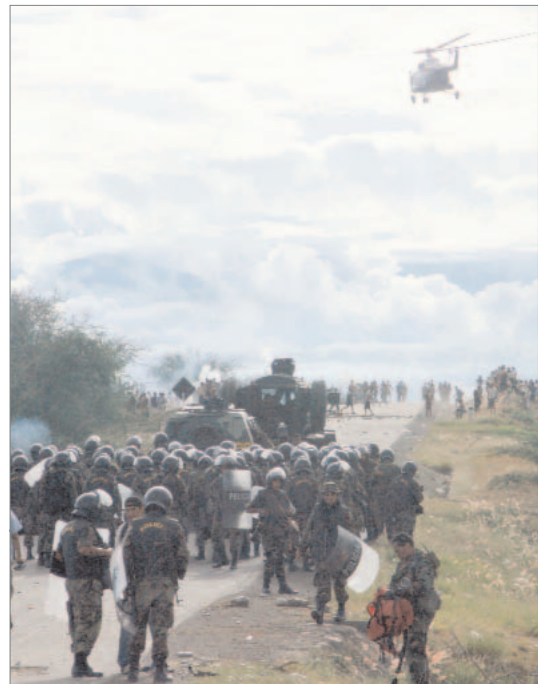
10

10. Suddenly police start firing to their left, responding to gunfire. People throw themselves to the ground.



11

11. The police arrest a protester.



12

12. A police helicopter takes away protesters who have been arrested. It returns later and is used to fire tear gas at protesters.



13



14



15



16

13-16. Police stop an ambulance as it passes. They force out the four wounded protesters inside, saying they have concealed weapons, and beat them.





17

17. Police beat the indigenous male nurse who had been in the ambulance.



18

18. A second ambulance passes by. Inside are two seriously wounded protesters.



19

19. Thomas sees the police officer in the picture aiming his weapon towards the Indian man in the background. Realizing he is being observed, he lowers his weapon and points his finger.



20

20. People from the nearby towns of Utcubamba and Bagua, having heard accounts over the radio of the violent police action, run towards the blockade, very angry. Marijke and Thomas observe that they are unarmed, though some carry sticks and stones, and a few have machetes.



21

21. The newcomers realize that the police are firing at them. They turn, and begin to flee together with the Indians, carrying the wounded.



22

22. People gather at a crossroads known as El Reposo. Marijke and Thomas, fearful of being shot, climb a nearby hill. The police do indeed shoot at them, but miss.



23

23. Dead and wounded are taken to hospital.



24

24. Police continue firing tear gas at the crowds at El Reposo, from a helicopter. When police on the ground arrive they arrest a large number of people.



25

25. People run back to Utcubamba and Bagua to escape the gunfire and tear gas.



26



27



28

26-28. In the hospital of Utcubamba, Marijke and Thomas only take pictures of those with relatively minor injuries, as the seriously wounded are being treated. According to the doctors there are two dead at the hospital, whilst Marijke and Thomas count 19 persons officially registered on the hospital list as wounded.





29

29. Afterwards Marijke and Thomas go out onto the streets and see a mass of people gathered in front of the police station. Thomas approaches them, but the police start shooting into the crowd so he turns away.



30

30. Marijke and Thomas go to Bagua. The streets are full of stones and broken glass.



31

31. Spent cartridges collected from the streets of Bagua.



32



33



34

32-34. Forty-seven people have been admitted to Bagua hospital. Marijke interviews some of the injured about what has happened. Most people have bullet wounds.



35



36

35-36. There are three bodies in the hospital at that time: an Indian, a police officer and a mestizo person. Marijke and Thomas see that the body of the dead Indian is taken out of the hospital and put into a car. They do not know why.



37



38



40



39



41

37-41. Marijke and Thomas meet two local officials. They tell them they have seen dead people on the road, but when they tried to pick them up, the police shot at them and did not let them pass. Marijke and Thomas return to the road. There are no police officers there any more, but they find two bodies. One of them (photo 41) has bullet wounds in his back. The bodies have been beaten and burned.





42-43. Beyond the Devil's Bend they find three more bodies. They have also been beaten and burned.



44-45. That same morning, a man who knows Thomas and Marijke, comes to Devil's Bend at 0800 from Jaen to see if there are any dead or wounded still there, and climbs the slope. He tells Marijke and Thomas later that he sees a helicopter hovering near the ground for a time before flying away. In the afternoon, Thomas climbs the hill. He finds no bodies, but there are bloodstains on the ground, cartridges, tear gas canisters, bloodied pieces of clothing, and large areas of burnt ground.



46-47. Thomas and Marijke return to Utcubamba, bringing medicines for the hospital. They interview some of the wounded in the hospital and hear that many have been shot and wounded in front of the police station. They subsequently return to Jaen.



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