

# Three killed in farmers, cops clash in Peru

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LIMA: Clashes between police and farmers led to the death of at least three protesters on Tuesday, as a strike against free trade and farm policies seethed for a second day, officials said.

Two men died from gunshot wounds after police fired into a crowd of protesters in the Andean state of Ayacucho, opposition congresswoman Juana Huancahuari, former head of the Ayacucho Agrarian Federation, said.

A third man fell to his death down a rocky slope, apparently while fleeing tear gas and rocks hurled by police in the neighbouring state of Arequipa, local media reported.

Highway police chief Coronel Eduardo Arteta said that officials were investigating the shooting.

Farmers went on strike across Peru on Monday to protest a free trade agreement with the US, demanding that their government invest in irrigation and bail out farmers' debts with private banks.

Prime Minister Jorge del Castillo declared a state of Emergency in at least seven provinces late on Monday, as protesters looted, blocked highways and fought police.

"We took this action because they were acting against private property, and because they continue to promote chaos," Del Castillo said, noting that he had given police and soldiers permission to quell protests with "severe force" if necessary.

At least 150 demonstrators have been arrested, he said. The state of Emergency will allow the military to police affected areas, guard highways and limit free transit and public gatherings.