

Death Toll Mounts as Unrest Continues in Peru

President Pedro Castillo, a former union leader, remains in detention amid a national state of emergency declared by the current military-backed regime

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Peru remains a center of resistance to the removal of President Pedro Castillo in a political coup by the Congress on December 7.

Castillo is still incarcerated on numerous charges including corruption and violation of the state constitution.

The former union leader and left-wing president has rejected these allegations and is demanding to be released from detention immediately. On December 22, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) was in Peru to investigate the current political turmoil.

As part of the assertion that he remains the legitimate head-of-state in Peru, Castillo requested a meeting with the IACHR delegation saying that the conditions under which he is being held are a violation of his human rights. Castillo, along with thousands across the South American country, are calling for the resignation of the recently installed President Dina Boluarte, the immediate release of the former president, the dissolving of Congress and the holding of national elections.

Castillo has received significant international support from several governments throughout the region. Mexico has repeatedly called for the president's release along with Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, Honduras and others. The Mexican government of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has granted political asylum to the family of Castillo, who have already left Peru.

The Mexican ambassador to Peru, Pablo Monroy Conesa, was expelled by the Boluarte government claiming that statements made by officials were hostile to the current coup regime in Peru. Since the impeachment of Castillo on December 7, the military has moved to seized control of all major transportation and infrastructure institutions in the country. This has taken place amid continuing strikes by workers, farmers and youth who have

blocked roads, highways, airports and trains. On December 22, the defense minister, Luis Alberto Otarola, was appointed as prime minister of the government in Lima.

Mexican President AMLO announced that his government would seek to maintain diplomatic relations with Peru under the existing administration of Boluarte. The president was concerned about the status of Mexican citizens living and working in Peru.

[Telesur](#) reported on the diplomatic crisis between Mexico and Peru that:

“Regarding the current situation in Peru, marked by a political and social crisis, AMLO described Boluarte’s administration as ‘a very questioned government.’ In this sense, he denounced the use of repression in the face of the conflict instead of opting for dialogue and ‘the democratic method’ of early elections. AMLO criticized ‘the attitude of the so-called political class, of the economic and political power groups in Peru.’ The Mexican President accused them of being ‘those who have maintained that crisis in that country because of their ambitions.’”

AMLO characterized the Peruvian society as being under a “state of siege” since December 7 when Castillo was removed from office and arrested by the security forces. In addition, the Mexican leader criticized United States Ambassador Lisa Kenna who met with the Boluarte government, giving the regime legitimacy.

Other imperialist centers also met with Boluarte including the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK). State Department spokesperson Ned Price went as far as to commend Boluarte for protecting Peruvian institutions and publicly proclaimed the recognition by the U.S. of the coup which resulted in the existing regime. (See [this](#))

The left-wing governments in South America, Central America and the Caribbean are constantly under threat by the U.S. Cuba has been under a blockade for the last six decades and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela defeated numerous coup attempts engineered by Washington and its allies in the region over the last two decades.

Peru has been undergoing political turmoil in recent years. The impeachment of Castillo and the ascendancy of Boluarte marked the sixth person to hold the office of the presidency in as many years.

Castillo is being held in pretrial detention which could last up to 18 months. After this period if he is not released, a judicial panel will decide his fate as it relates to the charges filed against him.

The country has been impacted by the worldwide rise in inflation. In Peru the rate of inflation is approximately 8.5%. Since the December 7 coup, uncertainty has increased both inside and outside the South American state.

A report published by [Telesur](#) noted:

“On Thursday (Dec. 22), the visit to Peru of the IACHR Secretary Tania Reneaum and her team concludes. They held meetings with authorities and organizations to gather information on the institutional crisis that the country is going through.

Since December 7, thousands of citizens have taken to the streets to demand new

elections, the closure of Congress, and the release of Castillo, whom lawmakers removed to appoint then-Vice President Boluarte in his place. With the support of the Armed Forces, her administration has harshly repressed social protests, which has left 27 citizens dead and dozens of people injured and detained. In this regard, prosecutor Karen Obregon opened an investigation into the heads of the Police and the Army as alleged perpetrators of 10 deaths in the department of Ayacucho.”

State of Emergency Declared by Installed President Boluarte

A 30-day state of emergency was declared by Boluarte after riot police and the military were not able to quell the initial wave of demonstrations. Peru, which in addition to its mining resources, is a center of tourism attracting hundreds of thousands every year to the ancient civilization of Machu Picchu. During early and mid-December, thousands of tourists have been unable to get transportation out of the area due to the popular uprising against the removal of Castillo.

In a first-person account of the situation in Peru, [the Jurist](#) printed a report from a law student which said:

“My flight was cancelled, since the protesters had taken over the airport and for safety reasons all the airlines suspended their flights until further notice. For this reason, I had to resort to another means of transport. There were no buses that provided the transportation service, there were only cars and since I needed transportation, I had to travel by hired car. However, I was unable to complete my journey as the roads were blocked.... A little later, the police arrived and started throwing tear gas canisters to try to disperse the protesters. The policemen were throwing many tear gas canisters, and they were also pushing the protesters, despite the fact that there were young people and older adults. This made the protesters angry and a fight started between the protesters and the police. I ran and tried to take refuge in some nearby houses because the situation was getting worse. I was afraid that the police would stop me or that the protesters would attack me.”

In a gesture to the popular movement, the Peruvian Congress passed a bill to hold elections by mid-2024. This measure differed from the proposal put forward by Boluarte who wanted elections to be held by December 2023. However, many outstanding issues remain within the context of these proposals.

Will the state of emergency be lifted along with the release of ousted President Castillo? This an important question because of the more than two dozen people already reported killed since December 7 must be addressed by the judicial system.

The bill in question was sponsored by the Constitutional Commission President Hernando Guerra, a far-right lawmaker and supporter of the party controlled by former presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori. However, this decision to move the elections from 2026, must be approved by the legislative session, which does not convene until March 1, 2023.

This latest political crisis in Peru has regional and international implications. The administration of President Joe Biden has not made any substantial changes in U.S. policy towards Latin America.

The objectives of Washington and Wall Street in the region remain essentially the same. The

U.S. wants to maintain control of the domestic and foreign policy of the governments throughout Latin America. This can only be done through the utilization of economic control and military domination.

All throughout South America, Central America and the Caribbean, the masses of people yearn for genuine liberation and sovereignty. In order for these objectives to be realized a protracted struggle must be waged against the U.S. and its surrogates so that total liberation and self-determination can be achieved.

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Featured image: Peru workers in support of Pedro Castillo after coup

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