

Protests Spread in Peru Demanding President Pedro Castillo be Reinstated

Seven reported killed as military moves to seize control over key national infrastructure

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Unrest continued in the South American state of Peru after the December 7 impeachment of socialist President Pedro Castillo.

The ousted leader remained in detention after an entire week of demonstrations and clashes between supporters and opponents of the former teacher and union leader who was just elected in a runoff vote during June 2021.

There are growing demonstrations in the capital of Lima where riot police have attempted to maintain control of the city. However, outside the capital in several rural areas, unrest has become intense as farmers placed rocks on highways seeking to block government security vehicles from entering their communities.

One protester named Laura Pacheco in Lima's San Martin Square was quoted as saying:

"We don't agree with the way our president was ousted, with lies and trickery. [Boluarte] doesn't deserve to be president, she hasn't been elected by the people. We are defending our democratic rights. We don't want to be governed by a usurper." (See [this](#))

Reports indicate that 2,000 riot police on December 13 blocked people from entering San Martin Square, a center of anti-coup demonstrations. These events have raised the level of discontent as people view the security forces as a key element in enforcing the coup and the ongoing detention of Castillo.

A legal appeal for the immediate release of Castillo from detention was rejected by the Peruvian Supreme Court on December 13. The parliament and judiciary has accused the former president of rebellion along with dozens of other criminal charges. Castillo and his supporters have dismissed these allegations as being politically motivated.

As the political atmosphere becomes more contentious, the recently installed President Dina Boluarte has yielded in part to one of the key demands of the protesters to hold national elections. Former President Castillo on December 7, anticipating the plans to have him impeached, sought to dissolve parliament and hold another round of elections.

Boluarte has called for elections in 2024 contradicting her earlier statements saying she wanted to remain in office to serve out the original term for Castillo which would have ended in 2026. Nonetheless, this gesture on the part of Boluarte has only aggravated the supporters of Castillo as they refuse to leave the streets in the capital and the public spaces in the rural areas.

At the same time, Boluarte has declared a state of emergency outside the Peruvian capital designed to empower the military and security forces to end protests across the copper-rich nation. Just two days after the political coup against Castillo, Boluarte made a public appearance with the military, apparently sending a signal that she would not hesitate to utilize maximum force to consolidate her power obviously in support of the landowning and mining interests.

[According to a report published by the Associated Press](#) in the wake of the killing of two youth by the security forces which prompted thousands of people to come out and demonstrate:

“The anger of Peruvians against their government is nowhere more visible than in Andahuaylas, a remote rural Andean community where the poor have struggled for years and where voters’ support helped elect now-ousted President Pedro Castillo, himself a peasant like them.... Demonstrators across rural communities, including Andahuaylas, continued to call on President Dina Boluarte to resign and schedule general elections to replace her and all members of Congress. They also want authorities to free Castillo, who was detained Wednesday (Dec. 7) when he was ousted by lawmakers after he sought to dissolve Congress ahead of an impeachment vote.”

In Andahuaylas, where Castillo received 80% of the popular vote during 2021, the people were hopeful that the issues concerning their class and social interests would be addressed. Unfortunately, the Castillo government faced the same type of racism and bias experienced on a daily basis by the people of this region of the country.

Castillo had promised in the 2021 campaign a redrafting of the Peruvian constitution, which has not been updated in nearly three decades when in 1993 during the government of Alberto Fujimori, the repressive former president whose daughter, Keiko, was defeated by Castillo.

One person was killed in southern Peru as demonstrators blocked access to the international airport located in Arequipa. The runway at the airport was occupied delaying operations for five hours on December 12.

Castillo Issues Defiant Letter from Detention

The ousted leader in a communique issued on twitter from inside a detention facility categorically rejected the coup against him as illegal and unconstitutional. He accused the right-wing of being behind the ascendancy of Boluarte and that he remained the only legitimate president of the country until new elections were held.

[A transcript of the letter read in part that:](#)

“Dear great and patient Peruvian people. I, Pedro Castillo, the same who 16 months ago was elected by all of you to serve as constitutional president of the Republic, speak to you in the most difficult moment of my government, humiliated, incommunicado, mistreated and kidnapped, still clothed with your struggle, with the majesty of the sovereign people, but also infused by the glorious spirit of our ancestors. I speak to you to reiterate that I am unconditionally faithful to the popular and constitutional mandate that I hold as president, and I will not resign or abandon my high and sacred functions.”

Castillo referred to Boluarte as a usurper and that she represented the “snot and slobber of the coup-mongering right.” Boluarte, who was the running mate of Castillo during the 2021 campaign on the Peru Libre Party slate, has apparently abandoned his social vision of a renewed political system in the country. Both Castillo and Boluarte are no longer members of Peru Libre due to ideological and political differences.

The former president reiterated that he remains committed to the impoverished and oppressed people of Peru and would not acquiesce to the dictates of his successor and the security forces. His sentiments were echoed among many in Peru who accused Boluarte and anti-Castillo elements in parliament of being out of touch with the majority of people inside the country.

Resistance to the Coup Spreads Rapidly

Since December 7, the opposition to the coup has continued to intensify around Peru. The unrest has aggravated the already worsening economic crisis in the country.

Inflationary pressures which are plaguing capitalist states internationally have had a profound impact on Peru. At the same time, a fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is now sweeping the nation.

In a report published by the Venezuelan-based Telesur, it emphasizes the growing uncertainty in the country, [noting](#):

“Peruvians continue to intensify their protests without waning their demand that former President Castillo be released. Amid a media siege that seeks to prevent the dissemination of what is actually going on in Peru, social organizations took to the streets of Cusco to perform an indefinite strike against President Dina Boluarte and Congress.’They hold Congress responsible for the situation the country is going through,’ independent outlet Wayka reported, showing protests where people forcefully reject lawmakers, whom they describe as lazy and indecent. ‘Thousands of people marched in downtown Cusco demanding a Constituent Assembly, the closure of Congress, and a deep political reform,’ journalist Clarys Cardenas tweeted. ‘They also reject the state of emergency in the Arequipa, Ica and Apurimac regions, where there is strong police repression,’ she added as the protests raged even on Monday night.”

On December 13, the Peruvian Corporation of Airports and Commercial Aviation (CORPAC) announced the closure of the Cusco international airport while requesting that the security forces be deployed to protect the facility. As noted before in Arequipa, the Alfredo Rodriguez Ballon airport will also remain closed as a result of the damage done by the demonstrations on December 12. Transportation authorities as well suspended the train service to Machu

Picchu, the historic location of an ancient civilization which is a center for international tourism.

The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP), which is the largest Indigenous organization in the Amazon region, called for mass demonstrations against the coup, the continuing detention of Castillo and the holding of general elections at the earliest possible date. Castillo has strong backing among the Indigenous communities in the rural areas particularly in the south of the country.

On a regional level, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has expressed his support for President Castillo saying that he was elected to office and should be released to serve his full term of office. Other governments in South America including Bolivia, Colombia and Argentina have come out against the coup demanding the release of Castillo and the respect for the human rights of the people of Peru.

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