

# President Humala declares state of emergency in Peru's port of Callao

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Peruvian President Ollanta Humala on December 5 declared a 45-day state of emergency in the region of Callao in response to warnings of an all-out war between rival gangs dedicated to drug trafficking and extortion operations centered around the country's main seaport.

An investigation by *La Republica* found that "criminal groups are able to smuggle drugs through the port of Callao by bribing workers and officials. One source quoted in the report, a former drug trafficker, said the port's security chief charges around \$20,000 for entry to the port, and longshoremen are paid at least \$10 per kilo of cocaine.

*Peru21* reported that police arrested more than 560 people in the first 10 days of the state of emergency. The national police confiscated 74 guns and disbanded 51 gangs. In addition, the Interior Minister added that they had seized 13 grenades, 301 kilos of drugs and 15,821 packages of marijuana.

While drug-related gang criminality and killings have affected the lives of thousands of Peruvians for many years, there are important and highly visible assets in the Province of Callao that may have played a larger role in Humala's decision to impose the state of emergency.

As Peru's main seaport, Callao handles 90 percent of the country's import/export cargo. Also, Lima's international airport is located on its territory. It is expected that travel volume will increase from 7 million individuals in 2009 to 21 million by 2020.

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Global investment dominates the province's airport and port industry. Lima's Jorge Chavez Airport is operated by Lima Airport Partners S.R.L., which is 70.01-percent owned by Fraport AG of Germany. According to [airport-technology.com](http://airport-technology.com), the airport

handled 8.7 million passengers and 232,374 metric tons of cargo in 2009.

The operator of Callao's North Dock is APM TERMINALS, which belongs to the Danish conglomerate A.P. Moller Maersk. The South Dock is run by DP World Callao, a subsidiary of the UAE's Dubai World. It was ranked as the top container terminal facility in South America. The company has operations on four continents and a heavy presence in several Australian seaports.

The week prior to the declaration of the state of emergency in Callao, the Executives Annual Conference took place. This is an annual summit of the major employers and investors, where most of the presidential candidates for next year's general elections gave speeches before the country's business elite.

Significantly, President Humala took the opportunity in closing the event to announce for the first time the imposition of the state of emergency. This makes clear that the emergency is intended as a demonstration for domestic and foreign business elites that the government can—and will—suspend democratic rights as it sees fit.

Callao's government is controlled by a thoroughly corrupt clique that has itself been accused of links with drug traffickers. The leaders of the ruling party in the region, Chim Pum Callao--in power since 1996--has been under investigation for a wide array of crimes, including embezzlement, wiretapping and corruption.

The immediate trigger for the state of emergency was the murder on November 28 of whistleblower Wilbur Castillo, who in 2012 denounced a network of illegal wiretapping set up by Chim Pum Callao.

Explaining the state of emergency to *Peru21*, Minister of the Interior José Luis Pérez said "the measure allows police to restrict citizens' freedom of

movement and freedom to assemble, as well as enforce curfews. Also the decree suspends the public's protection from illegal search and seizure."

Perez added, "police will be empowered to enter homes without court authorization to search for weapons caches and drugs, Peru's military will not be involved in the crackdown." However, the state of emergency allows the army to be deployed if needed.

Reactions to President Humala's action vary, reflecting disagreements within a government in disarray and confronting one political scandal after another. While the political establishment and corrupt Callao politicians support him, some have voiced opposition, saying Humala acted prematurely and that there are no legal grounds to take such a drastic measure.

President of the Superior Court of Callao César Hinostroza declared: "Under the Constitution, this can be done when the lives, physical integrity and public or private ownership of the vast majority of people in a given area are threatened. In Callao they are being eliminated among people who already had criminal proceedings, it is not for all citizens," said the magistrate.

Even members of the national police expressed reservations. Crime in Callao is not out of control, according to the chief of police in Callao region, General Julio Cesar Otoya.

For years, the Peruvian media has been focusing on crime and the activity of hitmen ("sicariato"), portraying them as the most important problems in Peruvian society. The result has been the promotion of repressive law and order measures which have culminated in this state of emergency.

For Peru's ruling class, the media's unrelenting portrayal of Peruvian society as gripped by a violent crime wave also serves to exclude from the political debate the more real issues of poverty and economic inequality. For example, recent polls have "established" that crime has surpassed poverty as the most "worrying" issue for Peruvians. Presidential candidates have dedicated significant time in their public appearances to making demagogic promises to end crime or even reimpose the death penalty.

The extreme right wing candidate for next year's presidential elections, former Wall Street banker and IMF-World Bank official Pedro Pablo Kuczynski

(PPK), was one of the first to embrace the declaration of emergency.



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