

Fujimori's new detention sets reconfiguration of Peruvian politics

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13 November 2018

After a seven-day judicial hearing, Keiko Fujimori, longtime leader of the right-wing populist *fujimorista* movement and its party Fuerza Popular (FP), was sentenced to 36 months (three years) of “preventive detention” by Justice Richard Concepcion Carhuanchu. Fujimori is now detained along with four other people, her closest political advisors, while being investigated for forming a “criminal organization” inside the FP and using it as a cover for laundering money received from the giant Brazilian construction multinational Odebrecht as part of its program of bribing the whole Peruvian political establishment as well as those of other countries in the region.

Fujimori and Co. were originally detained on October 10 under orders by Concepcion on the same money laundering charges. The decision shocked the whole country as Fujimori—with her extensive connections in Peru’s judiciary and business elite—was seen as an “untouchable.” Moreover, at the start of the year, she had been the leading politician, according to polls.

Under Peruvian law, a judge can order the detention of a presumptive criminal under investigation to minimize the risk of escaping the country. Fujimori’s lawyers appealed the initial decision, and three judges unanimously overturned the detention order. Fujimori and her fellow party leaders were freed after seven days of their ten-day detention. The judges argued that Fujimori and the rest posed no risk of flight or obstruction of justice.

Then, state anti-corruption attorney Jose Domingo Perez, who is part of the legal investigation team into the Odebrecht “Lava Jato” corruption scandal in Peru, announced that he had sufficient evidence to start an investigation into money laundering schemes involving Fujimori and a large group of FP members and requested that Concepcion hold a hearing where he could make the case for 36 months of preventive detention.

The judicial hearings started on October 24 and were televised, achieving record viewing audiences and capturing most of the attention of the national media. Outside the building where the hearings were taking place, *fujimorista*

followers and *anti-fujimoristas* engaged in street skirmishes.

On October 31, after seven days, Concepcion ordered Fujimori and her four close advisors to be detained for 36 months. Today, Fujimori is in a woman’s prison in the Chorrillos district of Lima, after District Attorney Domingo Perez ordered her detention. Also, Perez has announced he will solicit further hearings for other FP members.

Concepcion had previously placed former president Ollanta Humala (2011-2016) and his wife/accomplice Nadine Heredia under preventive detention for 18 months, while prosecutors investigated if and how they received Odebrecht’s bribes. Fujimori and Co. received a far longer detention because they are being investigated under the framework of the “Law against Criminal Organizations”.

Perez—who has been lionized for having managed to put Keiko Fujimori, a widely hated figure, behind bars—was helped by fresh evidence supplied by a secret witness. The witness voluntarily brought to the investigators’ office screenshots of a message chat used by the *fujimorista* caucus in Congress on which they discussed, among many other machinations, how to “shield” two high-ranking members of the judiciary: former Supreme Court member Cesar Hinostroza and current Attorney General Pedro Chavarry.

Both men were exposed by audiotapes leaked by an independent journalist group in July as being part of a secret criminal organization (labeled the “Port’s White Collars”) inside the judiciary. The audiotapes made clear that Hinostroza, Chavarry and many other judges and attorneys were part of a corrupt scheme that sold favorable sentences or major posts inside the state to wealthy individuals, businesses and even drug cartels. The audiotapes mention *fujimorista* congressmen and Keiko herself as being their most important allies. Hinostroza stopped an investigation into then-FP secretary Joaquin Ramirez, who had been accused of laundering money obtained through drug trafficking.

Fujimorista congressmen obstructed at least two petitions to investigate Hinostroza for participation in the “White Collars” group. Then, at the beginning of October, amid

mounting political and public pressure, Congress—controlled by the *fujimoristas*—finally lifted its protection of Hinostroza. However, it delayed the decision, in a seemingly deliberate manner, so that Hinostroza could secretly escape the country on October 17, flying to Spain, where he was, nonetheless, detained under a petition of the Peruvian government. Peruvian authorities have declared that they will seek his extradition.

Meanwhile, Chavarry is currently being protected. *Fujimorista* congressmen have voted against petitions by other congressmen for his removal as attorney general. During the last months, from his position of power, Chavarry sacked prominent attorneys investigating either Fujimori or APRA's former president, Alan Garcia, and their ties to the Lava Jato scandal. He also has been engaged in a war of words with District Attorney Perez, after he called Chavarry “morally unfit” for his post.

On top of the detention of its leader, the FP has also been hurt by several resignations inside the Congress caucus and the party. With Fujimori's detention, the party's abysmally low approval ratings and its disastrous results in the last municipal and regional elections, there is mounting fear within the FP that the party is entering its terminal stage and the time has come to jump ship as fast as possible.

Given the extremely personalistic character of FP and the whole *fujimorista* movement, it cannot survive without a member of the Fujimori family leading it. Keiko is now detained; her father Alberto (who ruled between 1990 and 2000) is holed up in a private clinic in order to avoid going back to jail after a judge nullified the pardon provided by then-president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski last December; and Keiko's brother Kenji has retired from politics after being politically destroyed in a vote-buying scandal set up by Keiko that precipitated Kuczynski's fall.

Fujimorismo was a right-wing populist movement that appealed to working class and lower-middle class layers on the basis of the “legacy” of the original Alberto Fujimori government: especially its limited welfare programs for the poor and its defeat of the nationalist-Maoist guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso.

On the other hand, it was the favorite party of wide layers of the ruling class, many of whom were the main beneficiaries of Alberto Fujimori's regime, whose other key “legacy” was a set of neoliberal reforms that privatized national industries and eliminated labor rights, creating major profit increases for multinationals and national companies.

The political obliteration of *fujimorismo* may push some of its disillusioned followers—or at least, those who voted for Keiko in the last election thinking that she would improve their conditions—toward the pseudo-left coalitions of Frente

Amplio (FA) and its split-off, Nuevo Peru (NP).

FA's candidates Veronika Mendoza and Marco Arana managed to achieve third place in the last elections (behind Kuczynski and Fujimori), and this was seen as comeback for “left-wing” politics in the country after having been nearly absent for more than two decades.

Then, Mendoza and her followers decided to split from FA and form their own coalition. In part, this was to exploit the growth of Mendoza's popularity among a generation that has only known right-wing governments, but more important was the tacit preference the political establishment has given to Mendoza over Arana, the main leader of FA, who is seen in ruling circles as an unreliable “left-wing extremist” after his years as an activist against mining multinationals in the environmentally damaged region of Cajamarca.

Amid their break-up, both factions demonstrated their utter subordination to the stabilization of bourgeois rule. They made clear their opposition to the independence of the working class by telling workers and youth that they had to vote for Kuczynski in the runoff against Fujimori, or Peru would be under the grip of a “narco-*fujimorista*” dictatorship.

NP spokesmen have confirmed that they won't be able to present the necessary signatures needed for achieving ballot status for their movement by the current deadline of this month; meaning that they won't be able to participate in the next elections as an independent party. They managed to obtain just 6 percent of the 750,000 signatures needed. They cited the lack of funds for the logistics of collecting the signatures throughout the country and the lack of interest from their own members. In order to further the electoral aims of their movement, NP officials are now considering entering into alliances with right-wing parties.



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