

# Peruvian president authorizes military to use lethal force to enforce the national quarantine

Cesar Uco, Don Knowland  
1 April 2020

On the weekend, Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra pushed through a “Military and Police Protection Law” that exempts the armed forces and national police from any criminal liability for injury or death if they act “in compliance with their constitutional function and in the regulatory use of their weapons or other means of defense.”

Moreover, under this law, the “principle of proportionality,” which requires that the degree of force correspond to the level of resistance offered and the danger presented by the person being seized or the situation being controlled, is suspended.

The law shows that the ruling oligarchy, in anticipation of widespread unrest arising from the spread of the coronavirus and deepening economic crises, is prepared to employ repressive measures unencumbered by any legal restrictions or basic democratic rights.

On Monday, Vizcarra announced that more than 4,000 people were detained in police stations on Saturday March 28, and that 2,909 more were arrested on Sunday, March 29, for violating the compulsory social immobilization measures. These measures were adopted under the state of emergency that was put in place on March 16 in response to the coronavirus outbreak and extended last week to April 12.

Because of these large numbers, Vizcarra said he was extending the current national curfew from 6 p.m to 5 a.m., and from as early as 4 p.m. in Tumbes, Piura, Lambayeque, La Libertad and Loreto.

The brutality of what is anticipated was made clear in a video prepared by the Peruvian armed forces that was released on the weekend and made available on WhatsApp under the hashtag #YoMe Quedo en Casa” (I remain in my house).

The video begins with a figure of a fully armed

soldier wearing a bulletproof vest and carrying an automatic rifle. The soldier proceeds to loudly bark commands as he narrates five scenes, each one ending with the threatening words of “if he resists the authority, the armed forces’ patrols will proceed to vigorously subdue, handcuff and throw ‘the suspect’ onto the ground, place their boot on his neck and take him to the nearest police unit.”

The five scenarios in the video involve a youth passively “resisting” military detention, four youths playing soccer, a small party of young adults dancing and drinking, young adults breaking into a commercial store to steal a few boxes of merchandise and an attempted attack on soldiers by a lone suspect.

None of what is shown in the video is likely to occur in wealthy or upper-middle-class neighborhoods.

Bloomberg reported Monday that Peru is undertaking a record fiscal stimulus and, as announced by central bank President Julio Velarde, will seek a contingency line of up to \$18 billion from the International Monetary Fund to contain the economic freefall arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

Velarde also announced that the Finance Ministry plans to draw down an existing \$2.1 billion contingency line from the World Bank.

The Central Bank had already cut its benchmark lending rate by 1 percentage point to 1.25 percent in March, but that had little measurable effect.

Although Peru had been held up as a paragon of financial and fiscal rectitude, since the arrival of the coronavirus in early March its bonds have been battered, and its currency fell to its weakest in 18 years this month.

According to Bloomberg, the package of economic measures the government is now proposing totaling 90 billion soles (\$26 billion), includes some health care

spending, but consists largely of tax breaks and loan guarantees for businesses, to revive an economy that has ground to a virtual halt after the government ordered a nationwide lockdown on March 16.

The stimulus package will equal 12 percent of gross domestic product, Finance Minister Maria Antonieta Alva said on Monday, a percentage exceeding that of the rescue package passed on Friday by the American Congress.

The stimulus package will include “short-term” measures such as cash handouts, including up to 30 billion soles in government-backed loans to small and medium-sized businesses, and “longer-term measures” to “rebuild” some decimated industries such as tourism.

The cash handouts contemplated are short-term because the Peruvian ruling class sees that as an insurance sop to quell mass unrest. The latest dictatorial measures show that what the Peruvian state is really preparing for: a prolonged period of military repression.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**