

Police killings fuel protests across Peru against newly installed US-backed Boluarte regime

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Escalating demonstrations demanding the resignation of newly installed president Dina Boluarte in Peru have brought the country's major cities largely to a standstill, as the police and military have carried out a brutal onslaught that has killed at least eight protesters.

According to national ombudswoman Eliana Revollar on Monday, those slain include Jonathan Encino Arias, 18; Wilfredo Lizarme Barboza, 18; Becan Quispe, 18; Jonathan Lloclla, 26; the minors D.A.Q., 15, and R.P.M., 16; and Miguel Arcana, 38. All were killed as a result of "projectiles from firearms," and several died during the occupations of the Huancabamba and Arequipa airports, she reported. Moreover, at least a hundred more people have been injured.

On Monday night, an additional killing was reported of a young man from a gunshot to his neck, only a few blocks from the presidential palace in Lima.

The demonstrations follow the rapid installation of Boluarte as president hours after the impeachment and arrest of President Pedro Castillo on December 7. The White House and the European Union immediately recognized Boluarte as the rightful successor and safeguard of democracy and the "constitutional order." Meanwhile the corporate media launched a campaign to celebrate her as the country's first female president and congratulated the armed forces for protecting democracy.

Within days, the U.S.-backed Boluarte and the state forces are already violently cracking down on peaceful demonstrations and roadblocks that oppose Castillo's impeachment. On Monday, Boluarte declared a state of emergency for 60 days in the departments of Apurímac, Arequipa and Ica—all in southern Peru, where support for Castillo is relatively higher—suspending democratic rights including "freedom of assembly, liberty and personal security."

While Boluarte initially insisted that she would finish Castillo's current term until July 2026, she has since announced a bill to move the general elections forward to

April 2024. But this has failed to dampen the unrest.

Alberto Otárola, who has been defense minister since Saturday, "absolutely rejected" that Boluarte will resign and vowed to "restore order." Moreover, he said that all the regional prefects in charge of local security and administration that were named by Castillo will be deposed.

Amid an already worsening economic situation and a massive COVID surge, the protests dramatically escalated after two teenagers were killed by police during demonstrations on December 11 in the southern Andean region of Apurímac. The UN Human Rights Office condemned "instances where the police appear to have resorted to unnecessary and disproportionate use of force and indiscriminate use of tear gas," including against journalists.

Spontaneous protests rapidly spread across the country on Sunday and Monday demanding the resignation of Boluarte, the closing of Congress and the holding of immediate elections. These have shut down the main Pan-American Highway in the north and south, which threatens food shortages in the cities.

While many openly support the liberation and reinstallation of Castillo, the most common slogans on the signs carried by demonstrators demand general elections and to "Throw them all out!"

On Monday December 12, thousands of demonstrators occupied the Arequipa international airport, the third largest in the country, which was re-taken hours later "thanks to the Armed Forces," according to an official statement. Demonstrators also occupied and set fire to equipment in the Gloria milk processing plant, while students occupied the University of Cajamarca, both in Arequipa. Hundreds of miners also marched against Boluarte in Arequipa.

In Cusco, thousands of students also occupied the University of San Antonio Abad. Later that night, demonstrators shut down the Cusco International Airport, which remained closed throughout Tuesday.

The Agrarian and Rural Front of Peru, an umbrella group of peasants, Indigenous, women and other social organizations, launched an “indefinite strike” on Tuesday demanding the liberation of Castillo, the shutdown of Congress, new elections, and a new constitution. They will be joined by the Peruvian Student Federation on Tuesday.

Moreover, the leaders of the Indigenous Ashaninka community in the Peruvian Amazon announced preparations for a “great march to Lima to dissolve Parliament.”

According to Jornada, Castillo supporters “from humble social backgrounds,” including representatives of rural self-defense committees or *ronderos*, have gathered at the San Martin Plaza in Lima, a historic gathering place for demonstrations, to discuss how to proceed amid calls for a “popular insurgency.”

Castillo has been able to publish several statements on Twitter declaring that he has been “abducted” and will not resign, while depicting Boluarte as an “usurper” and calling on the police and armed forces to lay down their arms.

Meanwhile, the governments of Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Bolivia, associated with the so-called “pink tide” released a statement on Monday that continues to recognize Castillo as president.

The main concern cited by the corporate media in Peru and internationally is the lack of any institution, political party or organization that is not discredited or holds any popular support to channel the demonstrations back into the fold of capitalist politics, which is also the reality across the region and beyond.

The *Los Angeles Times* concludes its report citing an accountant and single mother in Lima: “They all steal, and who ends up with real power? The richest...”

On December 7, President Pedro Castillo tried to preemptively cling to power by dissolving Congress and establishing a ‘state of exception’, which would temporarily suspend democratic rights and begin curfews.

Only a week earlier, the Organization of American States had concluded that it would not agree to Castillo’s appeal to this de facto arm of the US. State Department to oppose the drive by the far-right opposition in Congress and the courts to oust him. Then, almost immediately after Castillo’s speech on December 7, the US Embassy released a statement opposing Castillo’s orders, which was undoubtedly coordinated in back-channel discussions with the military, political and business leaders in the country.

The police and military then announced that they would not comply with Castillo’s orders, and Congress proceeded to impeach him in a 101-6 vote, with 10 abstentions. Congress has since removed his immunity to expedite his criminal prosecution.

Castillo was unwilling to make any popular appeal to

oppose the attempts of the far-right to oust him precisely because he is a capitalist politician entirely devoted to protecting bourgeois rule.

The barrage of corruption allegations used to depose his elected administration are a drop in the bucket compared to the massive web of kickbacks and money laundering engulfing the entire political establishment, especially the leader of the opposition, Keiko Fujimori, whose corporate backers confessed to handing over millions to her party.

At the same time, by implementing pro-market economic policies no different from those advocated by the far-right, including lifting anti-COVID mitigations, Castillo had lost virtually all popular support. Barely a year after coming to power, U.S. and European imperialism, precisely the forces that Castillo relied on, had concluded that his presidency was not useful given his inability to maintain illusions in the prospect of social reforms and continue suppressing the class struggle.

Regarding Washington’s claims to defend democracy and oppose corruption in Peru, US aid to the country increased dramatically and was the highest in the region right after former president Alberto Fujimori dissolved the Congress and convened a constituent assembly to draft the current reactionary constitution that all institutions are so keen on defending. He is currently jailed for organizing death squads and engaging in widespread corruption. His intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, who was videotaped paying congresspeople for backing the Fujimorists, was known for decades as an asset of the CIA, which paid him millions.

Following his impeachment, Castillo had attempted to flee to the embassy of Mexico, whose President Andrés Manuel López Obrador had agreed to grant him and his family asylum, but the leadership of the security forces ordered his escorts to hand over him to the police in Lima, which arrested him for “rebellion.”



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