

US-backed Boluarte regime continues repression as protests spread across north of Peru

Andrea Lobo
17 February 2023

For the 10th consecutive week, the wave of mass demonstrations and roadblocks across Peru has continued defying the brutal repression by the US-backed coup regime headed by Dina Boluarte.

The “paros,” or “strikes,” consisting of roadblocks on key highways, sporadic marches in town centers and partial stoppages by small business owners, service and agricultural workers, remain concentrated in the impoverished and predominantly indigenous southern departments of Cuzco and Puno. There have also been smaller, daily demonstrations in the capital Lima and other cities.

Outside of frequent roadblocks in La Libertad, the north of the country had remained largely absent from the protests until this week. On Monday, peasant rondas (autonomous peasant patrols) set up major roadblocks across the northern department of Piura, which is country’s main oil producer and has many important mines.

This was followed by the launching on Friday of four days of paros demanding Boluarte’s resignation, which was announced by leaders of rondas and local “defense committees” from across the coastal, Andean and Amazonia “macro northern region,” including in Piura, La Libertad, Tumbes, Lambayeque, Áncash, Cajamarca, San Martín and Amazonas.

The highways connecting the capital Lima with northern Peru as well as those connecting the ports with the mining and agricultural regions in the north witnessed numerous roadblocks on Friday, which are already being attacked by the police and military.

Even before these latest developments, the Financial Times stressed last Sunday that a third of Peru’s copper output, 11 percent of the world’s total, is at risk, which

could become “another driver of higher copper prices as China reopens its economy.” Credit ratings and growth forecasts have also been impacted.

On Tuesday, acting on behalf of the mining corporations and the Peruvian oligarchy, the Boluarte regime renewed for another month the national state of emergency, which has provided the framework to massacre nearly 60 demonstrators, terrorize the population, suspend democratic rights and deploy the military.

The regime has justified the repression with the claim that the demonstrations are being organized and financed by criminal groups and “terrorists.” General José Zavala, the head of the police anti-terrorism unit DIRCOTE, has become the face of this propaganda. Seeking to portray all opposition to social inequality as the work of “terrorists,” he stated in a recent interview: “Exactly in those places that work as hotbeds, they come and begin pointing to social differences and giving their message of hate, where they work on people’s minds.”

The renewed onslaught follows the visit by Boluarte’s Foreign Minister, Ana Cecilia Gervasi, to Washington, where the Biden administration explicitly reaffirmed support for the regime’s efforts to restore “stability.”

Having received a blank check from US imperialism, Gervasi felt emboldened enough to tell *The New York Times* in an interview published February 2 that “we don’t have any evidence” that the protests are backed by criminal groups. “I am sure that we will have that evidence very soon,” she added.

The regime’s widespread violations of democratic and human rights are sanctioned and aided by both US

and European imperialism. Boluarte herself was installed in a parliamentary coup on December 7 involving the impeachment and arrest of President Pedro Castillo that was backed by Washington and the European Union.

The United States has continued providing security aid—about \$40 million yearly, according to the Washington Office on Latin America— and Amnesty International documented this week that Spanish anti-riot gear exported with the approval of the PSOE-Podemos government is being employed in the repression.

Moreover, official documents of the Peruvian Police were leaked showing that Brazil’s Workers Party government of President Lula da Silva, who quickly endorsed the coup last year, authorized the sale of 28,960 tear gas canisters by the Brazilian company Condor to the Boluarte regime and the arrival on January 14 of a Peruvian Air Force plane to pick up the munitions.

The support to Boluarte from US and European imperialism, as well as the Brazilian government, explodes their claims of defending democratic and human rights.

Congress and the Boluarte regime are defended as the legitimate institutions in Peru. But about three-fourths of the population want the resignation of both Congress and Boluarte and the holding of new elections, according to several polls. In response, Boluarte has refused to resign, which would legally compel the congressional president to call elections, and Congress has repeatedly voted against new elections.

After a visit to Peru, the Argentine Mission for International Solidarity and Human Rights concluded that the “systematic and widespread” character of the extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, sexual abuse, torture, judicial harassment, and threats by the regime fall within the definition of “crimes against humanity” according to international law.

In a press conference, Marianela Navarro of the mission described her visit to Juliaca, where the security forces killed 19 demonstrators and left at least 60 more injured from live rounds on January 9. “We can indicate that there was an existing plan and intention to kill,” she said. “Many victims had gunshot wounds in the back. The state has massacred impoverished peoples. Indigenous women and peasants

cried as they told us: ‘500 years of discrimination and oppression and they butcher us like animals.’”

The mission also visited Ayacucho, where the military marched in formation and employed their rifles to mow down protesters on December 15. While officials claim that the massacre was meant merely to drive protesters out of the local airport, investigative journalists of IDL-Reporteros and prosecutors found that demonstrators were followed after leaving the airport and killed in a systematic manner. They confirmed that nine out of the ten demonstrators killed had been shot with munitions from rifles used by the military.

The repression has been so brutal that the Prosecutor’s Office felt compelled to approve an investigation against Boluarte and her prime minister Alberto Otárola over “genocide.” In response, Otárola absurdly claimed on Friday that “the one politically responsible for the uprising and deaths” was ex-president Castillo. Similarly, Congress voted to recommend the prosecution of Castillo for disturbing “public tranquility” and leading a criminal organization, while the Avanza País party of congressional president José Williams asked Boluarte to approve an amnesty for the police and military.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact