

Peru's new president brutally represses mass protest, leaving one dead and 100 wounded

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Repression unleashed against a massive mobilization opposing the recently installed government of José Jerí in Perú resulted in one person killed by the police, one in a coma and over 100 injured (including 11 journalists). Jerí, a 38-year-old lawyer who was elected as a congressman for the Somos Perú party, ascended to the presidency through constitutional succession after serving as the president of Congress. He replaced then-President Dina Boluarte who was removed overnight on October 10. He is the eighth Peruvian president in less than a decade.

The tragic toll from the October 15 demonstration bears a grim resemblance to the killing of 49 civilians who mobilized to protest the parliamentary coup that removed the pseudo-left nationalist president Pedro Castillo, which led to his vice president, Boluarte, ascending to power.

Then, as now, the repression was not about defending “order and social peace” but about sending a message to imperialism and the multinationals operating in the country that the new government would defend capitalism and guarantee the profits extracted from the exploitation of Peruvian workers.

The reaction of the newly installed President Jerí to the bloodshed in the streets of Lima was to solidarize himself with the Peruvian National Police (PNP) and declare a state of emergency in Lima and the neighboring port city of Callao. Presented as an anti-crime measure, the decree is clearly aimed at suppressing popular opposition. It suspends basic democratic rights and places the two cities under the control of the PNP and the Armed Forces.

The protest took place amid an escalation of strikes and mobilizations that began last month—including a transport strike, the 60,000 health workers' medical strike, and the “Generation Z” protests—against the

despised Boluarte government and the infamous alliance of far-right parties which dominate Congress, in practice establishing the policy agenda which Boluarte attempted to impose over the last two years. They now clearly expect Jerí to faithfully obey or risk being removed in an express manner, just as with Boluarte.

Far-right congresswoman Patricia Chirinos—one of the country's most hated figures—stated to an Ecuadorian journalist a year ago: “We can limit some things in her (Boluarte's) behavior and her decisions... As the Congress of the Republic, we are here to correct her ... and since we have the mechanism of the *vacancia* (removal) she could leave at any moment.”

Chirinos, with her typical cynicism and shamelessness, made it clear that it is virtually irrelevant who is elected or selected as president; the far-right parties entrenched in Congress will establish the policies that dominate the country.

Boluarte's removal, far from representing any concession to the overwhelming hostility that made her the least popular president in Peruvian history, was driven in large part by the jockeying by different right-wing factions in preparation for elections five months from now.

The October 15 mobilization was primarily called by youth collectives attempting to emulate the “Generation Z” protests that have overthrown governments elsewhere in the world. Transport unions, which had conducted blockades and strikes in recent months to ask the government to address the wave of extortion and violence they suffer, largely decided to abstain from the mobilization.

The General Confederation of Workers of Perú (CGTP) declared its support and participation, stating that Jerí's ascension “only represents a change of

figures” and criticized his vote for laws that weakened the justice system and favored organized crime. However, the CGTP and other union confederations have for decades opposed any attempt to confront the decline in workers’ living and labor standards—the real reason behind the increase in crime and violence—by mobilizing the working class and uniting their struggles.

The union affiliation rate in Perú is one of the lowest in the region, with a general figure of barely 8 percent of salaried workers, and around 5 percent in the formal private sector. For the so-called “Generation Z,” major struggles by the unions and mass affiliation to them ceased to exist years before they were born.

On October 15, protesters marched in the afternoon along the main avenues of central Lima leading to Abancay Avenue, where Congress is located. As night fell, the police began their attack with tear gas and shotgun pellets aimed at the body. The apparent justification for this was the attempt by a group of protesters to burn and throw an effigy of a giant violin—a symbol referencing accusations of sexual violation against Jerí—at Congress.

The police repression and the open use of firearms were well documented on social media. Around 11 p.m., reports state that a group of protesters discovered an undercover police officer and chased him. He stumbled and, in a panic, used his weapon to shoot, killing Eduardo Ruiz, a 32-year-old rapper from the San Martín de Porras district. Another protester, Luis Reyes, was struck in the head by a tear gas canister, destroying part of his brain and forcing doctors to induce him into a coma.

Initially, the national police, the government and their media allies declared that there were no undercover police officers in the protest and that Ruiz was attacked by another demonstrator. These lies crumbled when it emerged that parking lot cameras had captured the event. The police officer was identified as Sub-Officer Luis Magallanes, who was hospitalized because, after the shooting, he was chased down and beaten by the protesters.

In a clear act of cover-up, Interior Minister Vicente Tiburcio declared that the authorities will use Law 32130, which grants more power to police officers in investigations, to handle the case.



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