

Peru: Far right to dominate runoff for ninth president in a decade

Our reporters
13 April 2026

At the time of writing, with 56 percent of ballots processed, early results from Sunday's Peruvian elections point toward a runoff dominated by far-right candidates.

Keiko Fujimori, leader of Fuerza Popular and daughter of the former dictator Alberto Fujimori, leads with 16.94 percent. She is closely followed by Rafael López Aliaga, the ultra-right former mayor of Lima, and Jorge Nieto of the Partido del Buen Gobierno. Exit polls place the "Castillista" Roberto Sánchez in contention for second place, buoyed by support in remote rural regions whose votes may take longer to count.

These figures do not express any genuine popular enthusiasm for the far right. Rather, they reflect the depth of social despair and the absence of any independent political alternative for the working class.

The election—selecting Peru's ninth president in a decade—unfolds amid chaos and disorganization. In Lima, 13 percent of polling stations were not installed in the morning, affecting nearly 850,000 voters.

By the afternoon, the National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE) admitted that 211 polling tables had failed to open, disenfranchising over 63,000 people. Entire districts, including the working class stronghold of San Juan de Lurigancho, lacked electoral materials.

These irregularities, combined with delays linked to contractors tied to López Aliaga's mayoral administration, underscore the contempt of the ruling elite for democratic processes. At the same time, baseless fraud allegations were cynically advanced by right-wing candidates, preparing the ground for Trump-style allegations of a stolen election and further destabilization.

Despite 36 candidates and four presidents since the last elections in 2021, the political landscape remains essentially unchanged. In that election, Pedro Castillo led the first round with just 19 percent. Keiko Fujimori and López Aliaga followed with similar percentages.

Castillo was overthrown in a parliamentary coup in December 2022 led by the far-right Congress. His vice president, Dina Boluarte, was installed to lead the subsequent repression that killed over 70 people, but was later deposed amid mass opposition. A rapid succession of presidents followed, including José Jerí, ousted in a scandal, and José María Balcázar, who oversaw the vote.

A strengthened far-right Congress

The election takes place alongside the reestablishment of a bicameral Congress for the first time in 34 years, consisting of 130 deputies and 60 senators. According to exit polls, Fujimori's Fuerza Popular is set to dominate the Senate with 22 seats, while, together with López Aliaga's Renovación Popular, it could command a majority of 30. In the lower chamber, Fujimorismo is projected to win 41 seats, followed by the left nationalist Juntos por el Perú with 22 and Renovación Popular with 20.

This consolidation of legislative power occurs despite overwhelming popular opposition: nine out of 10 Peruvians disapprove of Congress. In recent years, it has carried out repeated presidential removals, granted amnesty to security forces implicated in human rights abuses, blocked any accountability for the killing of more than 70 protesters under Boluarte, and added obstacles to investigating ties of legislators to organized crime.

The role of US imperialism has been decisive. In 2022, Ambassador Lisa Kenna reportedly coordinated with military leadership during Castillo's ouster to ensure the armed forces defied his preemptive order dissolving Congress. The Biden administration subsequently provided full backing to the Boluarte regime, which authorized the deployment of over 1,200 US troops in the country.

Congress has also rewritten electoral rules to entrench its power. Null votes are redistributed among leading parties, disproportionately benefiting the established political forces. New provisions allow ballots to be preserved after voting, enabling potential manipulation.

The new Congress will not only retain the power to remove presidents but will also extend its authority over key institutions, including the central bank, judiciary, and prosecutorial bodies. The Senate itself is constitutionally protected from dissolution.

Amid rising violent crime—particularly extortion and assassinations in major cities—right-wing candidates have exploited public fear to advocate the strengthening of a police state. Yet they conceal the root causes: deepening social inequality under capitalism and the integration of criminal networks with sections of the political establishment. Figures such as Fujimori and billionaire populist César Acuña have longstanding legal cases linking them to narcotrafficking and illegal mining.

Geopolitical tensions and US intervention

The elections unfold within an escalating geopolitical struggle in which US imperialism is escalating its efforts to oust Chinese influence in the hemisphere.

Peru has become a critical node in global supply chains, particularly linking copper mining to China's electric vehicle industry. This relationship took concrete form with the inauguration of the Chancay megaport in November 2025 by Boluarte and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Donald Trump has directly threatened the port, while the State Department labeled it a tool of "predatory Chinese ownership." The Pentagon has allocated \$1.5 billion to relocate and upgrade Peru's main naval base north of Chancay—an explicit military countermeasure.

These moves form part of a broader US strategy to install pro-Washington, far-right regimes across Latin America, following models in Argentina and elsewhere.

Significantly, these geopolitical tensions have barely surfaced in the election campaign. Political analyst Gonzalo Banda noted to Al Jazeera that foreign policy was almost entirely absent from debate, despite Washington's increasing intervention. Even controversial decisions—such as abandoning plans to purchase Swedish Gripen jets in favor of more expensive US-made F-16s—failed to become campaign issues.

While Lopez Aliaga has expressed support for joining Trump's "Shield of the Americas" network of far-right regional governments and for US military intervention in Peru, among other similar statements, he chose to mark some distance with the fascist in the White House after his launching of the genocidal war against Iran.

Meanwhile, social tensions are intensifying. Gas prices have surged by up to 75 percent due to the US-Israeli war against Iran, while rising fertilizer costs—whose increase due to the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine was a major factor in the 2022-23 political crisis—threaten to devastate agriculture.

The role of the pseudo-left and union bureaucracy

The dominance of the far right, despite its unpopularity, is inseparable from the role of the nominal "left" and the trade union bureaucracy.

Candidates such as Roberto Sánchez and Alfonso López Chau each garnered around 8 percent according to preliminary results, offering no genuine alternative. Their campaigns centered on nationalist rhetoric, anti-corruption slogans—positions indistinguishable from sections of the right—and calls to pardon Castillo.

These forces reflect divisions within the bourgeoisie over how to balance economic ties with China against military and political alignment with the United States.

Pseudo-left organizations, including Morenoite groups like the Socialist Workers Party (PST), have oscillated between supporting bourgeois candidates and calling for spoiled ballots, while promoting illusions in the trade union apparatus.

The PST has backed one candidate after another. In a previous statement, it published that "we respect the enthusiasm" for the candidacy of Alfonso López Chau, an economics professor and former director of Peru's Central Reserve Bank.

Now it speaks of the "fiasco" of Pedro Castillo and calls Isabel Cortez a "bourgeois politician" after having previously supported them. Regarding the "illusions" in bourgeois politics that it now denounces, it is worth citing its 2021 statement:

Comrade Isabel Cortez, a working-class congresswoman who has been elected president of the Congressional Labor Committee, has inaugurated her performance by carrying out various actions in support of the unions in struggle. A true example that the workers recognize and applaud.

There is a historical crisis of the bourgeois regime, where the far right is increasingly strengthened after the opposition repeatedly links itself to anti-Fujimori candidates and coalitions, who ultimately come to office and cede power to the far right or are deposed.

However, it is significant that the entire political establishment is so discredited that even these opportunistic, middle-class groups, oriented toward the union bureaucracy, are refusing, for now, to endorse any candidate. Their alternative, under the slogan, "Faced with the electoral trap, return to the methods of struggle used in the southern regions," is yet

another fraud.

The reference is to the methods used after the protests against Boluarte and Congress, which included several so-called "Lima Takeovers" and "Four Suyos" marches, that were coordinated by the National Unitary Coordinating Committee for Struggle (CNUL), which actively worked to contain the movement.

Controlled by the bureaucracy of the CGTP, led by the Stalinist Peruvian Communist Party and its agrarian front, the National Central of Peasant Patrols, the CNUL systematically refused to call general strikes or mobilize the Lima working class, confining protests to isolated marches and road blockades that were methodically dispersed by security forces.

The WSWS characterized these organizations as representing "layers of the provincial and indigenous bourgeoisie and the urban upper middle class" that offered to help contain discontent in exchange for political concessions, channeling genuine social anger into the dead end of demanding a Constituent Assembly—which would merely serve to refurbish Peru's fatally discredited bourgeois political institutions.

What characterizes the entire pseudo-left is a nationalist orientation towards the state and trade union bureaucracies and a rejection of the political independence of the working class based upon a revolutionary and internationalist program. The result is a profound political vacuum. While the entire establishment is discredited, the working class remains without an independent political leadership.

Historical roots of the crisis

The present crisis is the culmination of decades of political degeneration.

Peru's political history has been shaped by various forms of left nationalism and radicalism with significant international influence, from the bourgeois nationalism of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre's APRA to José Carlos Mariátegui's indigenous nationalism dressed as "Marxism," the military reformism of Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado, and the Maoist guerrillaism of Sendero Luminoso.

By the mid-1970s, the limits of nationalism were exposed. A CIA-backed coup brought Francisco Morales Bermúdez to power, aligning Peru with IMF austerity and Operation Condor. Mass protests and a general strike toppled the regime in 1977.

The subsequent decades saw the discrediting of all political tendencies. The APRA government of Alan García ended in hyperinflation and repression. The United Left provided a "left" cover for bourgeois rule, while Sendero Luminoso's guerrilla strategy devastated rural communities.

This collapse paved the way for Fujimori's dictatorship in the 1990s, marked by the 1992 "self-coup," mass repression and sweeping neoliberal reforms. His regime ultimately fell amid corruption scandals, but its legacy persists through Keiko Fujimori.

Since then, every "left" populist government—from Ollanta Humala to Castillo—has followed the same pattern: campaigning on reformist promises, then implementing right-wing policies and repressing opposition.

The Odebrecht bribery scandal further exposed the systemic corruption of the entire political class, eroding any remaining legitimacy.

A historic crisis of bourgeois rule

Peru's elections express a historic crisis of bourgeois rule. The repeated collapse of governments, the consolidation of authoritarian power and the deepening social crisis all point toward explosive class struggles ahead.

The decisive question posed is the building of an independent political leadership—a Peruvian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International—capable of giving these struggles a genuine socialist and internationalist orientation.



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