

Effects of El Niño intensify across Peru, as Fujimori government prepares repression, not relief

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The effects of a widely predicted “super” El Niño are intensifying dramatically in midwinter, bringing unusually high temperatures. Peru’s National Meteorology and Hydrol across Peruogy Service (SENAMHI) reported that Lima reached 29°C this week, breaking a record that had stood since 1997. The reading is 9°C above the September average. Under normal conditions, such temperatures would be expected only during the hottest summer days, between January and March.

Because of the extreme heat, the government has placed 21 regions under red alert, covering virtually the entire country—the coast and the Andes— except the Amazon lowland departments.

The anomaly is so destructive that, so far this year, starvation has killed at least 9,570 sea lions, 2,144 guano birds, 30 Humboldt penguins, and hundreds of pelicans, gulls and other species. The Coastal El Niño, which pushes the cold, nutrient-rich waters of the Humboldt Current away from Peru’s coast, taking the fish with it—the main source of food for seabirds and marine mammals—is forecast to reach its peak between November and January 2027. These deaths were recorded in protected areas where the government collects figures. The actual toll is likely far higher, since many coastal habitats are not monitored and the worst of El Niño’s destructive force is still to come.

Infobae reports estimated economic losses of \$15 billion to \$25 billion in Peru. More than 13,500 families in the northern city of Lambayeque and thousands more in Piura face precarious economic conditions and reduced availability of traditional fish species such as silverside.

Conveagro, Peru’s National Agrarian Convention, estimates agricultural losses exceeding \$3 billion, with sharp declines in olives, strawberries and corn. The Peruvian Institute of Economics estimates El Niño will reduce GDP growth by a combined 0.8 percentage points in 2026–27.

The Coastal El Niño also affects Ecuador, where 494,274 hectares of crops face high flood exposure and 606,584 hectares face high landslide exposure.

In her inaugural address, President Keiko Fujimori identified public insecurity—extortion and the murder of drivers and small business owners—and the Coastal El Niño as the two most important challenges facing her government. On security, her government has joined the 14-country Shield of the Americas, using the fight against drug trafficking to justify declaring “states

of emergency” to deploy soldiers in the streets of working-class neighborhoods. Trump proposed the initiative on March 7, calling for governments to use their militaries domestically and oppose Chinese influence in Latin America.

Meanwhile, Central Reserve Bank of Peru Governor Julio Velarde has repeatedly warned about El Niño’s economic impact, compounded by rising fuel and food costs resulting from the Strait of Hormuz blockade during Trump’s illegal war against Iran.

El Niño 3.4 and El Niño 1+2

El Niño is occurring in a world already affected by global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions. It must therefore be examined carefully, since different climatic phenomena are occurring simultaneously. The distinction between the two principal El Niño regions is important.

El Niño 3.4 refers to an index measuring warming in the central equatorial Pacific, roughly between 5°N and 5°S and 170°W and 120°W.

El Niño 1+2 measures warming in the eastern equatorial Pacific along the coasts of Ecuador and Peru and is influenced by the localized Coastal El Niño. NOAA reported in September that sea-surface temperatures in Niño 1+2 were more than 3°C above average, while the Niño 3.4 index reached +1.8°C.¹

The Coastal El Niño, which can act as feedback on the global El Niño, develops when the ocean-atmosphere system maintaining relatively cool waters along Peru and Chile is disrupted. These waters belong to the Humboldt Current, which flows northward along the South American coast and, together with the upwelling it drives, brings the nutrient-rich water from the depths that sustains major fisheries.

A weakening South Pacific Anticyclone can reduce southeast trade winds and disrupt circulation. Weaker upwelling brings less cold, nutrient-rich water to the surface, raising sea temperatures. Warmer water increases evaporation and atmospheric moisture, favoring cloud formation and heavy rainfall. This interaction can reinforce the warming independently and act as feedback on El Niño in the central Pacific.

El Niño in Central America's Dry Corridor

El Niño is already damaging agriculture and livestock across Central America. Severe drought has struck the Central American Dry Corridor, particularly Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, where rainfall has remained far below historical averages since July 2026.

Current assessments indicate that 78.6 percent of corn-producing households lost 75–100 percent of their crops, while 65.4 percent of bean-producing households suffered losses of the same magnitude. Approximately 91,000 households have been affected, including about 70,000 suffering devastating losses and 23,000 facing serious water shortages.

Conservative estimates place agricultural losses at \$200 million and fisheries losses at \$100 million. In today's interconnected economy, such disruptions have global consequences: Central American crop failures can raise food prices, while declining Peruvian anchovy catches can increase fishmeal prices worldwide.

The Coastal El Niño in Peru is expected to become even more damaging

Conditions are expected to worsen. NOAA reported in September a greater than 90 percent probability that El Niño will reach very strong intensity during the Southern Hemisphere's spring and summer of 2026–27, and a 75 percent probability that October–December could produce a historically strong event, exceeding previous El Niño events recorded since 1950.

The impact on Peru's fishing industry is already severe. Anchovies, vital to both the fishing industry and the marine food chain, have moved into deeper waters and become less available to coastal fisheries. Production is projected at 1.8 million metric tons in 2026, down from 4.6 million in 2025 — a 61 percent decline. During the first half of 2026, only 840,000 tons were landed, compared with 2.8 million during the same period last year. The Ministry of Economy and Finance projects a 25.8 percent contraction in the fishing sector, with losses estimated at \$500 million to \$1 billion.

The potential economic consequences have attracted international attention. Reuters reported that Oxfam documented severe corn and bean losses in Central America's Dry Corridor, worsening food and water insecurity. *Le Monde* examined the potential impact on the global economy and on warming, while *El País* warned of threats to coffee and cocoa production. *The Guardian* reported rising food prices and other climate-related consequences worldwide.

The UN's World Food Program, meanwhile, has warned that El Niño-driven droughts threaten at least 16 million people across Latin America and Caribbean with severe food insecurity.

El Niño and the societies of the Peruvian coast

Since pre-Inca times, Peru's coastal peoples have depended heavily on the ocean. El Niño affected civilizations including the Paracas, the Moche and the Chimú. Researchers continue investigating whether exceptionally strong events contributed to the decline of the Moche civilization, which flourished on the north coast between roughly AD 100 and 800 — particularly the “mega-El Niño” events around AD 550 and 650. Torrential rains and floods destroyed crops, irrigation systems and adobe structures, followed by prolonged droughts and famine.

El Niño is a natural phenomenon of enormous proportions that cannot be controlled, and global warming is making these events more frequent and stronger. Society, however, can anticipate its effects, protect food supplies and reduce suffering among people and animals.

Even the Inca state maintained vast storehouses, known as qollqas, containing corn, quinoa, chuño, textiles and other goods. These surpluses were produced through the labor and tribute obligations of local communities. During poor harvests, droughts and other emergencies, authorities could redistribute stored reserves to affected populations.

By contrast, today the vulnerability of global food systems to climate shocks is registered primarily through the volatility of commodity prices. Financial markets allow speculators to take positions based on expectations of good or poor harvests. When agricultural disasters produce shortages, investors can profit from rising commodity prices. Under capitalism, food production and distribution are subordinated to markets and private profit rather than to preventing mass hunger and starvation.

The solution to capitalism-induced global warming and its effects, including massive disruptions of food supplies, requires organizing production internationally according to human need rather than private profit, through ownership and democratic control of the means of production by the international working class.



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