Rape of a student at Lima's Naval Lyceum: The brutality of Peru's military apparatus

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23 September 2026

On September 15, a 16-year-old fourth-year secondary student at the Almirante Guise Naval Lyceum in Lima's San Borja district was sexually assaulted by a group of fifth-year classmates aboard the school bus carrying the futsal (indoor soccer) team back from an inter-school championship. According to the complaint, the attackers used an object, and prosecutors are investigating the assault as rape.

On September 16, the family filed a complaint at the San Borja police station. The Seventh Family Prosecutor's Office of Central Lima opened an investigation; ten minors were detained, and on September 18 the Third Family Court of Lima ordered four months of preventive detention—the maximum permitted by law—for six of them, who were transferred to the Lima Juvenile Diagnostic and Rehabilitation Center, known as Maranguita.

The abuse cannot be explained as an isolated and extraordinary case, nor as the excesses of a military "culture" or a supposed "hyper-masculinity." The sexual violence at the Naval Lyceum is the expression, in an elite educational setting, of the function of the capitalist state's military apparatus: to brutalize, discipline and subjugate. And the institutional response—first minimizing the crime, then sacrificing a handful of adolescents and three staff members to leave the institution itself untouched—confirms that function.

"A game that got out of hand"

The school's first response was to play down what had happened. In its September 16 statement to parents, the administration described the incident as a "serious act of alleged physical aggression," without mentioning its sexual character, and asked that it not be publicized.

It was the victim's family, not the school, that went to the police. According to testimony reported by ATV, the principal called the parents in at 7:30 the following morning and told them to file the complaint themselves. The regional director of education for Metropolitan Lima, Cornelio Gonzáles Torres, acknowledged that hours later the school still had not registered the case in SíSeVe, the Education Ministry's system for reporting school violence, and described the school's conduct as "negligence."

Three adults were aboard the bus, the driver and two of the school's coaches. According to the authorities, they supposedly noticed nothing during the trip; the vehicle had no cameras. According to the victim's testimony, on arriving back at the school some of the attackers went out to eat at a Chinese restaurant as if nothing had happened.

The father of one of the students under investigation, who spat at a journalist outside the police station, described the rape as "a game that got out of hand" and presented the attackers as "sporty kids." He later declared that he should have been "more aggressive" with the press.

The Navy, which runs the school through its Welfare Directorate, suspended the principal, a teacher and the soccer coach pending the investigation, and hastened to rule out any interference in the process. The Defense Ministry of Keiko Fujimori's government confined itself to instructing the Navy to guarantee "due process." Classes were moved online.

Meanwhile, new complaints came to light. A teacher with 20 years at the school denounced bullying and reprisals that went unaddressed, and more than 40 parents held a protest outside the school. One mother said that bullying cases reported through SíSeVe "come to nothing," and that a beaten child ended up in the hospital with no word on what happened afterward. Other parents denounced discrimination "by your skin color, your surname, your stripes"—that is, according to the father's military rank. According to *Infobae*, the victim himself had previously reported bullying without receiving any response.

The Naval Lyceum as a training ground for the repressive apparatus

The Almirante Guise Naval Lyceum is run by the Welfare Directorate of the Peruvian Navy, and admission is reserved first for the children of naval personnel. Applicants must present the father's Naval Identity Card, and the children of civilians are admitted only to fill remaining places, paying monthly fees of 2,000 to 3,000 soles, compared with the 200 to 500 soles paid by naval families.

It is not a neutral educational institution: it is a training apparatus that reproduces, from childhood, the hierarchy and ideology of the

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repressive apparatus of the state. Its military regime and its closed, hierarchical character are not accidental features but go to the heart of the school's mission: to train students in unthinking obedience and in the capacity to exercise violence. The discrimination "by stripes" that parents denounce shows that the Navy's chain of command is reproduced among the students themselves.

Karl Liebknecht, in *Militarism and Anti-Militarism* (1907), explains that mistreatment within military institutions—"the horrors of the barracks"—is "an indispensable auxiliary" of military education. Members of the armed forces are not born fit for murderous violence: they must be broken psychologically, stripped of their humanity and trained in unthinking obedience. Sexual aggression against the most vulnerable—in this case, a student in a lower grade—is an extension of that process of brutalization.

The Navy's record and structural impunity

This case is not isolated. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) found that 83 percent of the cases of sexual violence during the internal armed conflict were committed by agents of the state—that is, by soldiers and police. The Navy has a documented record of sexual violence, directed overwhelmingly against women and girls from the country's poorest peasant and indigenous communities. The impunity that has protected the military institutions from prosecution for these crimes is not a deficiency of the judicial system; it expresses the fact that the armed forces are the armed instrument of class domination, and the state that is supposed to "judge" them is the same state that employs them.

The Naval Lyceum, which trains the children of the Navy, reproduces the same logic of domination in the educational setting. The group violence against a student in a lower grade is a rehearsal, in miniature, of the brutal hierarchy that the military apparatus exercises against the working class and poor.

The state's response: punitive measures that leave the structure intact

The measures announced—the detention of six adolescents, the suspension of the principal, the teacher and the coach, the switch to online classes, an inspection by the consumer protection agency Indecopi and the summoning of school officials before a committee of the Chamber of Deputies—leave intact the structure that produced the violence.

No one questions the function of the Naval Lyceum as a training ground for the repressive apparatus, no one touches its military regime, no one raises the abolition of an institution whose reason for being is the brutalization of its students. The state moves swiftly to punish individuals precisely in order to protect the institution.

The contrast with other cases is revealing. On June 14, a 17-year-old detained on suspicion of robbery died inside the police station in Manchay, in the Lima district of Pachacámac, after almost two days in police custody. The police claimed it was suicide; his parents, who were never notified of his arrest, said they found him beaten, that they were asked for money to secure his release and that their son had been tortured. The Interior Ministry's response was limited to temporarily suspending six police officers, and the official version of suicide still stands. The difference is not one of "culture": it is one of class. The state that failed to protect the life of a poor youth in its own custody is the same state that now moves swiftly to protect not the victim at the Naval Lyceum, but the image of the Navy itself.

To reduce this case to a moral condemnation of the act—or to demands for "better supervision" and "more precautionary measures"—is to obscure its significance. The case also takes on a particular urgency in the current political environment. In her July 28 inaugural address, Keiko Fujimori announced:

> The Armed Forces will temporarily assume leadership of security operations and the control of internal order.

The institution whose flagship school tried to pass off a rape as "physical aggression" is part of the same apparatus to which the Fujimori government is now handing control of the streets.

The fight against this violence cannot take the form of reforms within the Navy or ministerial reorganizations. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class to dismantle the repressive apparatus of the state and against the capitalist system that sustains it. Only the abolition of the bourgeois state and its military apparatus—as Lenin argued in *The State and Revolution*—can put an end to the violence that this apparatus reproduces.

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