Peru: Fujimori government jails rappers and activists on fabricated “terrorism” charges

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On November 19, Peru’s Counter-Terrorism Directorate (Dirección Contra el Terrorismo, Dircote) carried out simultaneous raids in Lima, Cusco and Tarapoto, arresting five people for alleged “affiliation” with the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, MRTA). The guerrilla group was dismantled nearly three decades ago under the dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), father of the current president, Keiko Fujimori.

Two of the detainees are well-known rappers. Pedro Mo (Pedro Gonzalo Mosqueira Velásquez), 42, arrested in Urcos, Cusco, has placed inequality, racism and corruption at the center of his music for over two decades. Brenda Jah (Brenda Denisse Mejía Sinarahua), 30, a drama student and feminist whose music accompanied the 2022-23 protests against the government of Dina Boluarte, was arrested in central Lima.

In Tarapoto, San Martín, police seized the brothers Polidoro and David Eraclides Tapullima Upiáchigua, father and uncle of Jacqueline Tapullima, a deputy for the opposition party Together for Peru (Juntos por el Perú). The fifth detainee is Libia Tatiana Arcila Vila, reportedly a Colombian artist. The Ninth National Preparatory Investigation Court authorized 15 days of preliminary detention for all five.

The specialized anti-terrorism prosecutor’s office claims the five belong to a structure linked to the Saturnino Huillca Rebel School (Escuela Rebelde Saturnino Huillca, ERSH), a cultural collective around peasant struggles, and to the People’s Democratic Front (Frente Democrático del Pueblo, FDP), and accuses them of “indoctrination, recruitment and propaganda.”

The case against Pedro Mo rests almost entirely on one protected witness, “Carlos Campos,” a supposed infiltrator who claims to have recognized the rapper among hooded, armed men in a 2025 Facebook video of alleged training in San Martín. The warrant was issued without forensic analysis or independent corroboration. Pedro Mo says he has never held a weapon.

The rest of the file is worse. Police combed Pedro Mo’s Facebook posts from 2022 to 2025 and labeled his sharing of the ERSH’s public event announcements “agitation and propaganda.” Four letters in which he offered art and ecology workshops to schools in Cusco were treated as a subversive strategy of “local positioning.”

Against Brenda Jah, police cited her Facebook interactions with Pedro Mo and other left-wing collectives. Prosecutors also tied her, again on the word of “Carlos Campos,” to an attempted rail sabotage during a July 2023 protest. The judge admitted there were no “objective data” placing her there, then ordered her detained anyway, citing flight risk because she has no steady job. Polidoro Tapullima is blind. His family says he was never given the court order in braille.

Defense lawyer Indira Rodríguez told *El País* that the raids took place without prosecutors or lawyers present, in violation of the law, and that the detainees are held incommunicado, sleeping on cement slabs.

The arrests are a political frame-up. Through a handful of artists and activists, the state is establishing that protest, political organization and critical art can be prosecuted as terrorism. They are a dress rehearsal for the repression the Peruvian ruling class is preparing against the working class, as anger mounts over the cost of living and the assault on labor rights.

“Virtual patrolling”

Citing prosecutors’ documents, *El País* reported on November 24 that a special team of the Metropolitan Terrorism Investigation Division (DIVTM) has monitored the Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok and YouTube accounts of left-wing activists, artists and collectives since at least 2025. Official reports call it “virtual patrolling.” A radical slogan or a protest call can end up in a police file as evidence of terrorism.

While extortion by gangs against transport workers and vendors and contract killings surge across the country, police spend years scrolling through rappers’ social media.

A “very urgent” police order published by Epicentro TV assigned anti-terrorism units to monitor a November 15 demonstration in Lima called by feminist artists. Lawyer Julio Arbizu reports that people with no political affiliation, some of them elderly, have been summoned on charges of “apology for terrorism” over left-wing comments posted online. “It is a clear message of what may come in the coming months for those of us who have been opponents and raised our voices,” he said.

Dircote chief Col. Max Anhuamán insists that everything was “filmed, documented and judicialized” after a nearly two-year investigation. Yet the same judge refused to detain five others under investigation, including two former MRTA members, ruling

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that their talks and posts were protected speech. The line between those jailed and those released is arbitrary.

Peruvians call this practice *terruqueo*: branding as a terrorist anyone who protests or holds left-wing views. The term dates from the 1980-2000 conflict, which left some 69,000 dead and disappeared. In 2022-23, intelligence units blamed the marches on Shining Path and MRTA agitators to justify sending in the military. Security forces killed 49 protesters.

A police state under construction

In less than four months in office, Keiko Fujimori has created a "unified command" of 1,350 police and military personnel, toured Nayib Bukele's CECOT mega-prison in El Salvador on October 29 and pledged to build similar prisons in Peru. She has obtained from the Senate powers to legislate by decree on 27 subjects for 90 days. With those powers her government issued Legislative Decree 1746, creating the National Registry of Criminal Organizations with Terrorist Practices (Renocte), an instrument for stigmatizing opponents. It has extended Legislative Decree 1095, the framework under which security forces carried out the killings of 2022-23, and created new categories for "organizations that employ techniques similar to terrorism" and "hostile groups."

This agenda is coordinated with Washington. Peru belongs to the "Shield of the Americas," the coalition of far-right governments Trump launched on March 7. As the WSWS explained at the time, it prepared an escalation of imperialist violence in Latin America under the pretext of fighting drug cartels.

The apparatus is not, however, the creation of fujimorismo alone. The "virtual patrolling" predates Fujimori, and the APCI law to strangle NGOs and civil society was passed in April 2025 under Boluarte. Every government for decades has used the "terrorism" pretext against the left. Fujimori is accelerating a course demanded by the Peruvian ruling class as a whole.

The real target is the working class. The arrests came as truck drivers paralyzed the main highways in a 72-hour strike against diesel price increases, amid soaring living costs, layoffs and extortion. The state is arming itself for the coming social explosion.

The ghost of the MRTA

The MRTA was a petty-bourgeois guerrilla organization rooted in Castroism and left nationalism. Its strategy of isolated armed actions, kidnappings and guerrilla warfare was the antithesis of the independent mobilization of the working class. The WSWS addressed this history in its review of the army-backed film *Chavín de Huántar: The Rescue of the Century*, which turns the 1997 hostage rescue into a fable of military heroism.

But the state is not pursuing the MRTA of 1997. It is using the ghost of the MRTA and the Shining Path to justify repression against today's opposition. Arbizu noted the absurdity: Saturnino Huillca, the Quechua peasant and union leader for whom the school is named, was nearly 90 when the MRTA was founded.

The dead end of appeals to the state

Three UN special rapporteurs have expressed alarm, with Gina Romero warning that the "closure of civic space" in Peru is reaching "alarming dimensions." Amnesty International, artists and opposition legislators have also protested.

These statements register real abuses, but they appeal to the very state carrying out the repression to respect its own laws. In 2023, UN experts demanded investigations into the killings under Boluarte. She remained in office until October 2025, backed by Washington throughout.

One rapporteur now asks what it will take for Peruvian institutions to take human rights and the rule of law seriously. The question presumes the Peruvian state has merely neglected them. It is a class state whose function is to suppress the working class and the opposition. Repression is not a deviation from the "rule of law," but its real content whenever the ruling class feels threatened.

Nor can the detainees be defended as "innocent artists" who pose no danger. That concedes the state's right to persecute those who do threaten it, that is, revolutionaries. The working class defends unconditionally the democratic rights of all, revolutionaries included.

The *World Socialist Web Site* demands the immediate and unconditional release of Pedro Mo, Brenda Jah and all the detainees, and the repeal of Decree 1746, the APCI law and the penal code reforms, which are laws of war against the working class. Their freedom will not come from a UN rapporteur's tweet, but from the organized power of workers, through strikes, rank-and-file committees and mass protests. This requires building a revolutionary party of the Peruvian working class, a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, to unite workers in Peru with those of Ecuador, Bolivia and the entire world against the capitalist state that oppresses them.

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