Fujimori announces mega-prisons in Peru modeled on Bukele's El Salvador

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The government of Peruvian President Keiko Fujimori is moving to build two mega-prisons in the province of Huaura, about 150 kilometers north of Lima, with a combined capacity of 24,000 inmates. On November 4, less than a week after touring El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), Fujimori handed over some 2,600 hectares of state land for the project and told Justice Minister Ernesto Álvarez to build the prisons quickly.

According to Álvarez, "Huacho 10" will hold 10,000 of the most dangerous prisoners in total isolation, while "Huacho 14" will hold 14,000 first-time offenders enrolled in the "Productive Prisons" program.

After a cabinet meeting last week, Álvarez insisted that "it is not necessary to build a CECOT," since Peru need not restrict fundamental rights "to such an extreme." Yet he had earlier proposed "hangar-type" prisons "following the model of El Salvador," and on November 9 he explained, "El Salvador has offered us technology. The United States, through its embassy, has also offered us modern technology."

Fujimori was blunter. Speaking at CECOT on October 29, she declared, according to the official newspaper *El Peruano*:

> "We have just received powers from the Congress of the Republic. And one of these powers is fundamental: to declare these hostile groups, as terrorists… Today Peru needs once again to recover order. But no longer from terrorist groups, but from these criminal gangs that do not respect borders, but which are terrorist groups."

On October 6, the Chamber of Deputies had in fact struck the explicit terrorist designation from the government's request for legislative powers on crime. Fujimori made clear she intends to pursue it anyway. Her prime minister, Luis Galarreta, has explained its purpose: the armed forces will have "the tranquility to act" against gangs classified as "hostile groups."

The mega-prisons will do nothing to end the extortion and killings that terrorize working-class neighborhoods. They are part of a wholesale assault on democratic rights in Peru and across the region, carried out by far-right governments that exploit fear of crime to build up the repressive apparatus and line up behind Washington. Their real target is the working class, whose living standards and basic rights are being destroyed in defense of profit.

Rehabilitating the dictatorship

Fujimori's "once again" was no slip. Under her father's regime in the 1990s, anti-terrorist legislation became the instrument for persecuting political opponents and suppressing social opposition, while the military death squad known as the Grupo Colina carried out the Barrios Altos and La Cantuta massacres. The practice of branding opponents as terrorists, known in Peru as *terruqueo*, was revived under Dina Boluarte to justify the killing of some 50 demonstrators after the removal of President Pedro Castillo in December 2022.

The legal ground has been prepared step by step. On August 13, 2025, Boluarte promulgated Law 32419, promoted by the Fujimorista legislator Fernando Rospigliosi, which grants amnesty to soldiers, police and members of self-defense committees prosecuted for crimes committed between 1980 and 2000.

Law 32735, published on July 21, 2026, a week before Fujimori took office, gives military-police courts priority over civilian courts for acts committed during states of emergency. The next day, a police officer under investigation for a killing during the 2022–23 protests asked to have his case transferred to the military courts.

On October 22, prosecutors shelved the investigation into the forced sterilizations carried out under Alberto Fujimori, covering 4,172 women from 22 regions and five who died. They did so even while acknowledging indications of crimes against humanity, applying a 2024 law that imposes a statute of limitations on such crimes committed before 2002. Among the 52 people under investigation was Alejandro Aguinaga, Alberto Fujimori's health minister and now a Fujimorista senator.

These measures dismantle the legal obstacles to the use of state violence against future working-class opposition.

The Bukele model and Washington

According to InSight Crime, 16 mega-prisons have been proposed in 10 Latin American countries since El Salvador's CECOT opened in 2023. On October 14, Costa Rica inaugurated its 5,100-inmate High-Containment Center Against Organized

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Crime, built on plans donated by El Salvador. In Ecuador, the El Encuentro prison opened in November 2025. It has faced 70 lawsuits over alleged abuses and malnutrition, and Daniel Noboa plans to open another jail for 15,000 inmates.

The justification offered is Bukele's supposed success. El Salvador reported 82 homicides in 2025, a rate of 1.3 per 100,000. But killings had already fallen from 6,656 in 2015, a rate of 103 per 100,000, to 1,147 in 2021, before Bukele's state of exception. *El Faro* revealed in 2020 that the government had negotiated with the gangs, and a US Justice Department indictment of MS-13 leaders later confirmed that officials granted prison benefits in exchange for fewer killings. Only after these deals broke down, amid a surge of killings in March 2022, did Bukele impose the state of exception. CECOT opened the following year.

The state of exception has suspended constitutional guarantees ever since. More than 90,000 people have been detained, nearly 90 percent of them without a conviction, and Bukele himself has acknowledged releasing about 8,000 with no proven gang ties. Amnesty International's July report documented at least 470 deaths in state custody through December 2025.

This savage model has Washington's blessing. In March 2025, the Trump administration agreed to pay El Salvador $6 million to imprison deportees in CECOT.

On September 10 of this year, after meeting Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Lima, Fujimori announced Peru's entry into Trump's "Shield of the Americas," a US-led alliance launched in March to coordinate intelligence and military operations against "narco-terrorist cartels." At a Shield meeting with Trump on September 22, Fujimori boasted, "Peru has defeated two terrorist groups, the Shining Path and MRTA."

Behind the alliance stands Washington's drive to reassert its domination over the hemisphere against China, Peru's largest trading partner. In February, the State Department warned that Peru risked losing sovereignty over the Chinese-built megaport of Chancay to its "predatory Chinese owners."

Crime and the capitalist state

Crime and insecurity are real problems for millions of workers. On November 10, Lima bus drivers stopped work and marched on Congress against extortion and the killing of drivers by criminal gangs.

But the prisons are a central part of the problem. Álvarez himself has called them "universities of crime." INPE, the national prison authority, reports 107,227 inmates crammed into space for 41,764. InSight Crime notes that the Tren de Aragua, Brazil's First Capital Command and Ecuador's Los Choneros emerged or grew stronger inside prisons, which mass incarceration only expands as recruiting grounds.

Capitalism condemns millions of young people to poverty, unemployment and exclusion from education. Organized crime recruits from these layers, while the state criminalizes the population the economic system has cast aside. The function of the capitalist state is to defend the property relations upon which bourgeois rule rests. Under conditions of deepening crisis, that means destroying the democratic rights won by the working class through decades of struggle.

The historical lessons of the Peruvian workers' movement

The Peruvian bourgeoisie, dependent on imperialism and fearful of the working class, never carried out the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The Stalinist Communist Party subordinated the struggles of Peruvian workers to the theory of the two-stage revolution, according to which workers must first support a supposedly progressive national bourgeoisie before taking up the struggle for socialism. Its support for the military government of Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado, which seized power in 1968, was the decisive expression of this line.

The enormous revolutionary potential shown in the national strike of July 1977 against the Morales Bermúdez dictatorship was then channeled into the Constituent Assembly convened by the military to organize its retreat. The Pabloites, led by Hugo Blanco, whose FOCEP slate won 12 percent of the vote in 1978, joined the Stalinists in promoting the illusion that democratic and social reforms could be secured without the working-class taking power.

Decades later, the promotion of the left nationalist Pedro Castillo as the vehicle for the aspirations of workers and poor peasants reproduced the same orientation. In April 2022, Castillo imposed a curfew on Lima and Callao to put down protests against rising prices.

Against the two-stage theory, Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution established that in countries of belated capitalist development, the democratic tasks can be realized only through the conquest of power by the working class, leading the oppressed peasantry behind it and extending the socialist revolution internationally.

The spread of mega-prisons across Latin America underscores the urgency of this perspective. The defense of democratic rights, the eradication of poverty and the struggle against imperialist war require the independent political mobilization of the working class across national borders, as part of the struggle for world socialist revolution.

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