

REPORT ON THE LEFT'S MISSION TO PERU



A mission of the political group of The Left in the European Parliament visited Lima, the capital of Peru, between 6 and 9 February 2023. The mission was formed by:

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Introduction

The mission takes place in the context the social protests that have broken out in Peru since the removal of President Pedro Castillo on 7 December and which, at the time of our visit, had left a total of 56 dead, nine of them minors, according to figures confirmed by the National Human Rights Coordinating Committee¹. However, the mission was able to ascertain from various local actors that the number of dead people is even higher and the number of wounded is impossible to quantify, although several sources speak of more than 1,500 seriously injured people during the protests.

The appointment of Dina Boluarte as President by the Congress of the Republic and the refusal to call for elections has generated a crisis of legitimacy of Peruvian institutions, which are facing high levels of rejection. According to the polls conducted by Datum, 71% of Peruvians currently demand the resignation of Dina Boluarte and 77% demand the dissolution of Congress². This movement of rejection of the current Peruvian institutionality has originated in rural areas and the southern regions of the country, the areas where Pedro Castillo gained most of his support, regions with a high proportion of indigenous people and peasants, with high levels of poverty.

The protests have already reached Lima through the delegates from the provinces, sent by communities from all over the country that make an enormous human and economic effort to enable them to travel

¹ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GHVb4rpnCJWOwh1MNvtlkQGxc4A6Pgy>

² <https://www.prensa-latina.cu/2023/02/10/segun-nueva-encuesta-mayoria-quiere-renuncia-de-presidenta-de-peru>

to and stay in the capital to defend their collective demands, as well as through the mobilisation of the people of Lima itself. The last big march in the capital was the one called by the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP) and the Unitary Union of Peruvian Education Workers (SUTEP) on 9 February, which the mission accompanied. The demonstration was part of a national strike day which was banned by the Peruvian authorities³, but the mission was nevertheless able to witness the massive participation.

In response to the demonstrations, the authorities have unleashed a wave of repression which, beyond attacks on the demonstrators themselves, includes the harassment and detention of social and political activists and human rights defenders, and the militarisation of the main centres of protest through the decree of a state of emergency in seven of the regions with the greatest social conflict (Madre de Dios, Cusco, Puno, Apurímac, Arequipa, Moquegua and Tacna)⁴.

During its stay in Lima, the mission had an agenda of meetings with the country's main actors in different areas in order to learn first-hand about the situation, their analysis of it, and their main demands. The meetings were with:

- Institutional representatives of different progressive groups of the Congress of the Republic (Cambio Democrático - Juntos por el Perú, Perú Libre, Perú Bicentenario and Perú Democrático).
- The National Assembly of the Peoples - an organisation formed around the mobilisations that brings together different representatives of political, social and trade union movements, as well as territorial organisations and representatives of indigenous peoples.
- Political organisations from the progressive space (Peruvian Communist Party, New Peru Movement, Communist Party - Red Fatherland, Socialist Party).
- The trade union movement, including the CGTP leadership.
- The women's movement, including the leaders of the National Federation of Peasant, Artisan, Indigenous, Native and Wage-Earning Women of Peru (FENMUCARINAP).
- The student movement, including the leaders of the San Marcos University Federation.
- Journalists and independent activists.

Our findings

Throughout the visit, the mission was able to observe and listen to first-hand testimonies of the following violations of fundamental rights that have been taking place in Peru since the protests began and about which we are particularly concerned, as they represent a violation of international standards:

That the harassment of those participating in the protests by the authorities is systematic and the authorities follow a strategy to break the leadership of social movements. During the period that the mission was in Peru, the head of human rights of the CGTP was arrested on the day before a demonstration, and several leaders expressed the fear of being included in the authorities' blacklists and being arrested.

That there is a public targeting of social, political and trade union leaders, as well as human rights defenders, both by the authorities and their related media, based on false accusations of violence.

That the authorities and their related media are using accusations of terrorism and of terrorism promotion to delegitimise and criminalise the protest movement, a practice known as *terrorismo* the Fujimori dictatorship already used against its opposition.

That the headquarters and premises of political, social and trade union organisations are raided and subjected to heavy police control with the

³ <https://www.infobae.com/peru/2023/02/09/ministerio-de-trabajo-declaro-improcedente-la-huelga-convocada-por-la-cgtp-contra-el-gobierno-de-dina-boluarte/>

⁴ <https://derechoshumanos.pe/2023/02/no-al-estado-de-emergencia/>

aim of intimidating them and their activists. The mission was able to observe an enormous and disproportionate police deployment around the headquarters of the New Peru Movement in Bolognesi Square in an attempt to intimidate demonstrators from different regions who use this space to spend the night and share meals in Lima.

That people in police custody are denied basic rights such as access to a lawyer, knowledge of the reasons for their detention or even eating or going to the toilet for hours at a time. That, for arrests during police raids, including in homes, the possession of materials of legal political or trade union organisations, such as posters, as well as books by Marx, Lenin or the Peruvian Marxist philosopher Mariátegui, have been used as alleged evidence of terrorist activity.

That detainees are denied medical assistance and that injured people cannot go to hospitals and medical care centres, as there have been numerous cases of arrests there, and in some regions they are even forced to declare in writing before entering a hospital that the injury to be treated is not linked to participation in the protests.

That in order to avoid arrests, voluntary medical brigades have been formed to treat those injured by the violence of the authorities during the protests, and that these medical brigades have also been attacked by the police on different occasions.

That the use of live fire against protesters has occurred on a regular basis by both the police and the army in regions where protests are largest.

That unidentified armed individuals and groups acting in complicity with the security forces are visible during protest actions, and that these individuals and groups have focused on protecting the property and interests of private companies.

That the political groups close to the Boluarte government use parliamentary bodies such as the Parliamentary Ethics Committee or the Subcommittee on Constitutional Accusations in order to harass parliamentarians critical of the government's actions and try to omit any criticism of the human rights violations that have occurred in the context of social protest within the Congress of the Republic. That proceedings are already underway against Members of Congress Sigrid Bazán and Guillermo Bermejo, with whom the mission met, which are an attack on the freedom of expression of parliamentarians.

Our demands

For all these reasons, the mission of the group of The Left in the European Parliament puts forward the following demands regarding the role of the European Union in the current crisis in Peru:

In view of the allegations of crimes against humanity committed by the Peruvian authorities, the European Union must work with the Peruvian authorities and the different social and political actors in the country to put an immediate end to the repression and violence.

In view of the numerous evidence of the use of riot control equipment to repress the Peruvian population by their own authorities, EU Member States must immediately implement Common Position 2008/944/CFSP which explicitly prohibits the export of military technology and equipment that could be used for internal repression.

In view of the criminalisation of political, social and trade union leaders and human rights defenders through false accusations, as well as the lack of due process and the denial of rights to those detained, the Delegation of the European Union in Peru must send observers to the trials that take place in the context of the political and social repression that is taking place, and its diplomats should regularly visit those detained or imprisoned for political reasons.

In view of the impunity of human rights violations in the country, the European Union must point out that the Trade Agreement between the European Union and Peru, signed in 2012, which in its article 1 cites compliance with human rights as the basis of the relationship between the two parties.

In view of the role that transnational corporations are playing in the protests, the due diligence legislation currently being worked on at the European level should include binding measures for the protection of human rights defenders, ensuring that European companies are not responsible for or complicit in repression.

Conclusion

The mission noted the strength of the protest movement in Peru, which has channelled the crisis of legitimacy of the country's authorities since Dina Boluarte took office. Peru is a tremendously rich country, with important mineral reserves that include 9 per cent of the world's copper and 880,000 tonnes of lithium. It also has one of the main ports in the American Pacific and an agro-food industry with exports worth more than 1.3 billion dollars a month⁵. However, it is also a hugely unequal country. According to the Peruvian state, 39% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty⁶, a figure that exceeds 50% in several departments. The 1993 constitution, written in the midst of Alberto Fujimori's dictatorship, is the main guarantor of the neoliberal model that has been imposed in Peru in recent decades and which enshrines private ownership of land and resources. That is why the protests, despite having Castillo's dismissal and the current crisis of legitimacy as a trigger, are rooted in the dispossession and marginalisation of a huge part of Peruvian society. This explains why their origins and greatest strength lie in the departments far from Lima's centres of power, in the areas inhabited by indigenous people, by people dispossessed of their resources and excluded from decision-making, or where poverty prevails despite the enormous profits of transnational mining and agro-export companies. Protests have begun in parallel in different territories that share this common denominator, and in this way reflect a popular will to put an end to a model that has proven itself time and again incapable of providing democratic responses to the people's problems.

The mission has observed how the demand for a constituent assembly is put forward by all the demonstrators and social organisations precisely as a way of reversing a model in which the majority of the population cannot participate in decision-making and does not feel reflected in the institutional framework. The high rates of corruption that have characterised the last decades of Peruvian politics, the concentration of the country's wealth in a few hands, and the racism and discrimination against indigenous and peasant people are structural elements that the 1993 constitution reinforces and against which the current protest movement has built its main demands. This is why the election of a constituent assembly with an equal number of men and women and reflecting the plurinational character of Peru appears today as the only way to overcome this crisis, together with the immediate call for presidential and parliamentary elections.

⁵ <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mincetur/noticias/669846-agroexportaciones-peruanas-superan-los-us-6-700-millones-al-cierre-de-setiembre-del-2022>

⁶ <https://www.comexperu.org.pe/articulo/los-departamentos-mas-pobres-a-nivel-multidimensional-y-su-avance-en-la-ejecucion-de-inversion-publica>