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Biden administration reaffirms “US support” for murderous regime in Peru

On Wednesday, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said that Biden administration officials had welcomed and met in Washington D.C. with Ana Cecilia Gervasi, the foreign minister of the Peruvian coup regime of Dina Boluarte.

Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman “expressed US support for Peru and President Boluarte, and her efforts to affirm Peru’s democracy, ensuring peace, stability and the unity of the Peruvian people,” according to the official statement issued by Price. The Biden administration, moreover, “encouraged the government to continue taking steps to hold those responsible for acts of violence accountable.”



More than 200 troops joined the National Police to clear roadblocks in Arequipa, Peru, on January 27. [Photo: Peruvian Armed Forces]

While accompanied by the threadbare references to “human rights” and “peace,” the Biden administration is endorsing and providing material assistance to an authoritarian regime installed in a US-backed coup last December. The statement openly declares support for

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Boluarte's ongoing escalation of military and police repression, which has already involved the killing of nearly 60 unarmed demonstrators, mostly with live ammunition.

The regime recently renewed a state of emergency that authorizes the deployment of troops against protesters and the suspension of democratic rights, including freedom of assembly and speech and the right to life and safety.

Just four days earlier, the capital, Lima, recorded its first confirmed police killing of a demonstrator. At least two videos have surfaced that show police shooting a tear gas canister directly and at close range at Víctor Santisteban, who was left with a 1.5-inch hole in his skull. The 55-year-old plumber and electrician was protesting days before a trip to Argentina to meet his grandson.

Reflecting the levels of bestiality being employed by the security forces, police Gen. Victor Zanabria responded to Santisteban's autopsy and the videos by claiming that tear gas canisters are not "hard objects" and insisted that a fellow protester standing near the victim must have been responsible for the injury.

It's worth noting that the Biden administration is echoing the same calls by the Peruvian far right to detain more "instigators" on fraudulent charges as a means of further terrorizing protesters.

Most recently, state prosecutors demanded that the leader of the Ayacucho People Defense Front, Rocío Leandro Melgar, remain in custody for 18 months for allegedly belonging to a "terrorist" organization and participating in a murder in 1992. No evidence other than "intelligence" reports have been presented. The Ayacucho Defense Front has backed the protests and continued to give political support to deposed president Pedro Castillo, who was also vindictively given 18 months of pretrial detention.

On Monday, 20 Democratic members of the US Congress issued an open letter asking the Biden administration to denounce the "human rights violations" in Peru and temporarily halt security assistance funding.

While invoking the hypocritical pretension that US imperialism defends democracy and human rights, the signers knew that the Biden administration would simply ignore them. Anticipating this, the letter muddies the waters and provides a cover for Boluarte's criminal policies by stating: "While we recognize that a small number of protesters have participated in violent acts, the Boluarte government has a responsibility to distinguish criminals from peaceful protesters..."

The unprincipled and bankrupt appeal, which was signed by all the US representatives who belong to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), responds solely to the

interests of US imperialism in sustaining the “human rights” hypocrisy used by Washington to justify the escalation of its war drives against its geopolitical rivals like Russia and China.

Thousands of demonstrators in the southern departments of Junin, Apurimac, Arequipa, Cusco, Puno and Tacna continue to defy the state of emergency and participate in roadblocks and peaceful marches, while hundreds continue to demonstrate in the capital Lima.

On Thursday, the national ombudsman said that protests and roadblocks continue in 27 provinces representing 13.8 percent of the national territory, and that confirmed deaths have risen to 66.

The roadblocks have resulted in major fuel shortages and affected natural gas production across the south, while Bloomberg warned last week that 30 percent of the country’s copper output is at risk in the world’s second top producer, “at a time of low global stocks and high prices.”

On February 1, citing transportation and supply issues, the Chinese-owned MMG Limited halted operations at the Las Bambas copper mine, the third largest in the country, responsible for 2 percent of global production.

The US-based multinational Freeport mining corporation said last week that its Cerro Verde copper mine, the largest in the country, has had to cut back operations 10-15 percent due to the blockages. The major Antapaccay mine, owned by US-based Glencore, remains shut down since protesters invaded it early last month.

“Due to the protests,” the Canadian-based American Lithium halted its hydrological studies in the Falchani Project in Puno, which could hold one of the world’s largest lithium deposits.

Mines in the north and shipping have reportedly not been affected, and local business organizations have called for the deployment of the military across the southern mining corridor to clear roadblocks.

Facing a terminal political crisis in Peru, marked by the ouster of six presidents in five years, US imperialism and the European Union are concerned above all by the prospect that mining, energy, shipping and other workers in key sectors will intervene and further disrupt the output of strategic minerals and natural gas from Peru.

As shown by recent statements by the Pentagon and the trip of German chancellor Olaf Scholz to the region, the imperialist powers see Latin America as a key source of natural

resources and cheap labor as part of their ongoing efforts to isolate and subjugate Russia and China and redivide the world.

In Peru, and increasingly across the region and beyond, there are no credible institutions or political parties left. With much of the Peruvian political establishment also facing prosecutions and arrest for corruption, the ruling class finds no other answer than naked violence to the resurgence of the class struggle, which is driven above all by opposition to social inequality, inflation and austerity.

Recent polls show that 71 percent of the population supports elections this year and 74 percent want Boluarte to resign. In response, Boluarte insisted that her resignation is not an option, but vowed to keep demanding Congress approve elections in 2023.

In a nationally televised speech on January 30, Boluarte incongruously repeated the lie that demonstrations are being instigated by “an organized group seeking to sow chaos,” while warning of the “imperative of improving the democratic legitimacy of the country’s political representatives” by “channeling institutionally” the popular demands.

However, the far-right parties that control Congress are demanding an even more brutal repression, insisting that moving forward elections will not resolve the political crisis. After meeting last weekend with Boluarte’s cabinet, the fascistic congressman and former head of the military José Cueto said to RPP Noticias that he asked for “a greater force of authority to prevent new terrorist acts.”

Cueto also demanded that the military remain deployed even after demonstrations stop, proclaiming an international “war” against “Communist hordes.”

Congress “is there to work, legislate and supervise,” he said, confirming that they are calling the shots, while the executive power is there to “maintain order.” Hoping to use the current regime to crush opposition to their reactionary economic and social agenda at the behest of the transnational corporations and local oligarchy, the far right in Congress insists that Boluarte and the current legislators must finish the term until 2026. These are the fascistic political forces backed by the Biden administration in Perú.

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