

Why should we support the popular rebellion in Peru?

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More than 20 years later, the Peruvian people have set in motion a mass struggle against a government that wants to assert itself with dictatorial elements.

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At this very moment there is a very hard struggle going on in Peru. On one hand, a popular uprising, whose high point was the general strike last Thursday, January 19; on the other hand, an increasingly isolated coup government, which is clinging to repression to sustain its program and initiatives. This ongoing battle is decisive for the future of Peru and the continent.

We, in Revista Movimiento, are covering it on a daily basis, talking to the protagonists of the process, mobilizing international solidarity, following “up close” the heroic struggle of the Peruvian people. I was in Lima for a few weeks, as a correspondent of Movimiento, taking the solidarity of the MES and the PSOL to the fighters who are rising up.

Here, in a summarized way, we put the dynamics of the latest events and the need for a position of the Brazilian left and of the Lula government regarding the institutional crisis opened by the coup plotters of the Dina Boluarte government.

The march of the 4 Suyos, 20 years later

As we know, on December 7 last year, Castillo suffered a parliamentary coup after a clumsy attempt to oust the rightist majority in the National Congress. As a result of this palace action, his vice president, Dina Boluarte, became president. Castillo was arrested and imprisoned.

To consolidate himself in power, Boluarte chose right-wing figures for the ministry and around it – notably Williams and Otarola. Since the first days of the coup government, the South Peruvian led different protests and demonstrations, to which Boluarte responded with more repression. The year ended with a balance of activist deaths, and hopes on the part of the government for a truce over the Christmas holidays that would stabilize the situation.

However, the force of the intervention by the peasants and workers of southern Peru (the vast majority of whom are of Aymará and Quechua indigenous origin) led to a real popular uprising in the province of Puno in the first days of January 2023. Within this context, the government promotes the Juliaca massacre, leaving 18 dead – one of the most tragic chapters in Peruvian history.

The indignation grew, took hold throughout the south and spread throughout the country. On January 19, a new “March of the 4 Suyos” was called. This name refers to the demonstration that took place in July 2000 and was the trigger for the fall of Alberto Fujimori’s dictatorship. The “four suyos” were the four affluent political points in the different regions of the country during the Incaic period.

More than 20 years later, the Peruvian people have set in motion a mass struggle against a government that wants to assert itself with dictatorial elements.

The general strike was a great success. The March of the 4 Suyos was called “The Taking of Lima” by the press because of the hundreds of delegations that arrived from all over. The streets of the Peruvian capital were empty, almost like a Sunday or holiday. In addition to the demonstrators from the countryside, delegations from the remote neighborhoods and districts, coming from the hills, marched to the center of Lima to repudiate the government and demand Dina’s resignation, as well as the closure of Congress, new elections and a Constituent Assembly.

The strike of the 19th definitely nationalized the Peruvian popular rebellion. Radicalized protests were held in the northern provinces, with almost 100 roadblocks, with broad popular support.

Government insists on repression

The march of the 19th ended in major battles in the streets of downtown Lima. There was a fire in a historical building, used by the press and the government to disperse and criminalize the demonstrations.

In the following days, Dina went on TV to defend herself, affirming that she would remain in office and that she would continue with the “order” line. The San Marcos University was invaded by the forces of repression on January 20th, with tanks and bombs, ending with the arrest of 200 activists. We have had almost 60 people killed in the process, 600 arrested, as well as the arrest of leaders of the Front in defense of Arequipa, accused of terrorism.

In a constant loss of support, the government is sustained by a repressive turn. Besides ostensive police action, it combines a narrative brand with the persecution and criminalization of activists. The right-wing discourse has two pillars: the traditional “terruqueo”, which means to impute to political opponents the relationship with terrorist groups, evoking the memory of the actions of groups that were active in the 80s and 90s; and the attack on Evo Morales, claiming that the leader of the Bolivian MAS would be behind the protests in the South, with the objective of the secession of the country. The absurdity of this narrative is aimed at preventing the rebellion from advancing.

The current situation is one of an increasingly weak government, politically, supported by the repressive forces and the most reactionary sectors of the hated congress. Polls show that 70% want a new constitution; 88% reject the government and 75% do not trust the current composition of Congress.

The government is isolating itself even among the middle classes, in big cities like Lima.

The Left must support the democratic struggle in Peru

We have reached a decisive moment in the national crisis marked by the Peruvian rebellion.

In the streets and roads of Peru, the future of the continental struggle is being played out. Today, the extreme right is entrenching itself in Bolivia against the MAS government, in Brazil with the Bolsonarists, and in Peru to sustain the Dina government, opening the way for the return of the Fujimori clan to power.

In the midst of the Celac meeting, South American governments should be committed to supporting the Peruvian rebellion. Petro's government pointed a way, condemning the invasion of San Marcos University. The omission by sectors of the left only helps in sustaining Dina's repressive turn. Argentine President Alberto Fernandez, in an interview for the newspaper Folha de São Paulo on January 23, cited his concerns about the "instability" in Peru, without naming names or pointing out the government's clear responsibilities. Lula, for his part, and Brazilian diplomacy have not spoken about the massacres and violations of fundamental rights that have been taking place in recent weeks. It is necessary to change this course and take sides in this battle.

The PSOL, which approved in December, in its National Directory, a note of support to the Peruvian people, is playing to surround the ongoing rebellion with solidarity. We participated in acts in the embassies, the deputy Fernanda Melchionna, along with the caucus, questioned the Peruvian government for the violence and notified the responsible bodies in Brazil about the transaction and sale of weapons for the repressive forces of the government of Peru.

The heroic struggle of the Peruvian people deserves our support.

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