

Los Angeles protest: Peru's will must be respected!

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SLL photo: Jefferson Azevedo

On August 26, Peru Libre — the Free Peru national political party - organized a demonstration in the Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles. A group formed by people from Peru, other South American countries, Mexico and the U.S. gathered in front of the Peruvian Consulate to show support for the government of newly-elected President Pedro Castillo.

They demanded an end to the war that has been waged against Castillo by the Peruvian Congress and military, which are acting under the influence of the U.S., Canada, and the oligarchs and transnational corporations that control their governments.

“The U.S. government has no business in Peru,” declared Lazaro Aguerro, a Peru Libre Party member. “You don’t have the right to put military bases in Peru. Peruvians are the ones who must solve their problems, not you. We don’t want your bases and that’s not what the Peruvian people need. You should stay away from the political issues of Peru.”

This war was going on even before the presidential elections that pitted Pedro Castillo, an Indigenous school teacher and union organizer, against Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of former right-wing dictator Alberto Fujimori. Maneuvering by Fujimori and the Peruvian elite blocked Castillo from being officially declared president for more than a month after his decisive victory in June’s runoff election.

Peru Libre is a socialist party that has massive support from the people, especially impoverished rural and Indigenous Peruvians. As usual when it comes to parties that put the interests of the people ahead of the interests of corporations, the right wing wants to destroy it. Old tools of imperialism like defamation and lies through the capitalist-owned media are being used to achieve this goal.

Peru’s Congress is another body working to destabilize the Castillo presidency. Everything that Castillo and his party try to do, like forming a cabinet with the

people they want, is being denied, as seen in the forced resignation of Foreign Affairs Minister Hector Bejar.

Bejar, a former member of the Maoist guerrilla movement Sendero Luminoso, rejected the Washington-dominated Lima Group and sought a new approach to relations with Venezuela and Nicaragua. That was too much for Western imperialism — so he had to go.

The oligarchs might have forced Hector Bejar to resign with pressure from the right-wing sectors. But he will remain in the war by continuing to assist and advise Castillo's government.

Destabilization campaign

The destabilization campaign is ongoing. It is urgent that independent, internationalist media go to Peru and show the rest of the world that the people of Peru support Castillo's government in its fight against powerful enemies who have the Congress, the media and the military on their side.

The local media, to the surprise of no one, is on the side of the reactionary forces — especially after Castillo cut the slush fund by previous governments given to the media to pay them off for their support.

The media have always been supportive of former Peruvian governments and spoke in their favor. But with Pedro Castillo, they act completely differently. During the presidential runoff, Fujimori had the support of all the corporate media. Afterward, dissatisfied with the results, they helped in her attempt to steal the elections by falsely claiming she had won.

The people didn't remain idle. Through massive mobilizations and demonstrations, they were able to deter the attempted coup. Social media was the only reliable way that Peru Libre and President Castillo had to counter the lies spread by the

mainstream media and counter-balance its partiality.

As for the other prong of imperialist-controlled sabotage, the Peruvian military brass, many of them are afraid that they will go to jail as punishment for crimes committed during Alberto Fujimori's presidency, as President Castillo promised to bring justice to their victims. Therefore they have another reason to want regime change.

Taxing big business

President Castillo is also demanding that foreign corporations pay over 20 years of back taxes or they will not be allowed to operate in the country. Before, these transnationals (the mining sector being one of the biggest) were tax-exempt with the excuse that they were "bringing jobs to the country." The truth is, they brought few jobs and took vast amounts of the nation's wealth, leaving the poor, and especially Indigenous people, destitute of the most basic necessities of life.

It's no coincidence that the right-wing-controlled Congress just voted to allow more U.S. military bases in Peru.

The current constitution was written during Fujimori's presidency and, like in any other capitalist country, devised to support the interests of the bosses and landlords instead of the people. The Peruvian Congress can impeach the president at any time, even without serious charges against the sitting official. In late 2020, Peru had [three presidents in the space of a week](#).

Speakers at the Aug. 26 protest explained that the people are demanding a new constitution. Signatures are being collected everywhere, even here in the U.S., for a referendum on a new constitution to be created by an elected popular assembly. This is something of the utmost importance to the future of Peru.

As in Bolivia, Venezuela and all Latin America, the reactionary forces do not accept

Indigenous and working-class people in power. A democratic Peru must be defended at any cost and President Castillo must be respected because the people chose him.

