

Peruvian lawmakers attempt to pass bill to unprotect Indigenous people

written by Al Mayadeen English
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Lawmakers in Peru have taken advantage of ousting President Pedro Castillo as a

chance to secretly pass a bill into law that would take away the 2006 law protecting “uncontacted” Indigenous people, which would also risk reserves and spaces they call home.

Modifying the 2006 bill is aimed at impeding the creation of new reserves and eliminating existing ones – currently, there are seven in Peru’s Amazon. This poses a grave risk for up to 25 “uncontacted” peoples living in the Amazon rainforest, which is the second-largest following Brazil’s.

Beatriz Huertas, an anthropologist working with Orpio, the Indigenous federation in Loreto, Peru’s largest Amazon region, said, “I’ve never seen such a nefarious bill in 30 years working for the protection of isolated Indigenous peoples.”

Outright genocide

This comes swiftly as the country remains knee-deep in the crisis after President Castillo was ousted, leaving at least 22 people killed in violent clashes and protests with security forces. On Tuesday, Congress agreed to move forward with early elections, but a second vote is required to finalize it.

Peru’s Indigenous federation Aidesep said the bill “would cause genocide” and noted that their “brothers and sisters” were “highly vulnerable and threatened by the increasing pressures on their territories” from matters ranging from infrastructure projects, logging, and illegal mining to drug trafficking.

The proposal seems to be backed by a group of businessmen in Peru who have already financed a campaign in an effort to deny the existence of “isolated peoples” wholly.

The business group, which names itself the Loreto Sustainable Development Coordinator, claims that Indigenous reserves are a sham and impede development in the region that sizes larger than Germany.

In a separate yet recent context, a large majority of Indigenous Canadians protested in the streets of Montreal amid the final negotiations of the [UNFCCC's COP15](#) event on biodiversity, which was posing risks of threatening Indigenous peoples and homes.

"The people are trying to speak, trying to say you can't just talk, you have got to act," said Sheila Laursen, a member of the activist group Raging Grannies.

Member of a tribe that calls the Ecuadoran Amazon home, Helena Gualinga, commented, "Let's not forget that... to protect biodiversity we need to [protect Indigenous people first](#), Indigenous people are protecting biodiversity."

'It is suicidal'

Secretary-General of the Indigenous Federation of Orpio, Pablo Chota, is continuously fighting and has been for 19 years for the creation of the Napo-Tigre Indigenous reserve on Peru's border with [Ecuador](#). He expressed, "[The isolated people] are our brothers and sisters, we are protecting life." The Napo-Tigre region has been subjected to oil drilling by the Anglo-French oil company Perenco.

According to Julia Urrunaga, director of the Environmental Investigation Agency in Peru, civil society groups in the country expressed grave concern about the bill, which may be passed in light of current circumstances. "Peru can't take more conflict," she said.

"In a world where we each day have more evidence of the role of Indigenous peoples in the protection of the world's last remaining natural forests, it is suicidal to attempt to eliminate protections for Indigenous peoples and their forests," she relayed.

Source: [Al Mayadeen English](#)

