

# Protests and repression in Peru's capital intensify

written by Peoples Dispatch  
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Mobilization in Lima, January 28, 2023. Photo: Juan Zapata / Wayka

55-year-old Víctor Santisteban Yacsavilca was declared dead on Saturday, January 28, after he was shot in the head with a pellet gun by the National Police of Peru.

Yacsavilca is the first protester to die in Peru's capital Lima since the protests against the coup began in December. Videos of him being shot show him standing with a group of journalists, medical brigade members, and other protesters and falling to the ground immediately when police begin shooting at the group. Subsequent videos show a large pool of blood on the ground where Yacsavilca fell.

His death occurred on one of the bloodiest nights to date in Peru's capital. January 28 began with a mass march in the center of the city with traditional dances, songs, and chants, but after a couple hours, the events turned ugly. Once night fell, police ramped up their repression of the protests by shooting tear gas and pellet guns at protesters, press, human rights defenders, and medical brigades. Several people were rushed to the hospital with grave injuries, a large number of them cranial, including Yacsavilca's.

Videos on social media have shown that police aimed tear gas canisters and pellets at people's bodies, namely heads and chests, suggesting an intent to wound.

The night also saw a record number of attacks against journalists. Two journalists from *Wayka Peru*, Kevin Huamaní and Valía Aguirre, were attacked by police officers when they were recording the arrest of a citizen. The media outlet denounced that their equipment was taken and reported that the journalists were subsequently brought to the emergency room at Grau Hospital. A journalist from *Comunicambio*, Lucciano Balvin Ñahuis, was arrested while covering the protests, and remains in detention until today, according to the media outlet. A Spanish journalist from *El Salto Diario* was [hit in the face](#) with a projectile by the Police, narrowly missing his eye.

Following the violent repression, many human rights organizations, political activists, journalists, and members of Congress went to the hospitals and police stations to monitor the status of those injured and detained. At the Grau Hospital, where many of the severely injured were brought, police attacked those waiting

outside with batons and tear gas. They also arbitrarily detained some of the people who were hospitalized.

The events of January 28 have been widely condemned by human rights organizations within Peru and internationally. On January 29, a vigil was held where Yacsavilca was shot, to honor the more than 60 fatal victims of the violent repression in the country. Several major marches are planned this week to continue demanding Dina Boluarte's resignation, elections this year, and a constituent process.

### **Early elections**

On Monday, January 30, the Peruvian Congress will be voting on a bill to hold early elections in October 2023. The bill proposed by Hernando Guerra García of the Popular Force party was voted upon on January 28 but did not receive sufficient votes to be passed. The session was suspended and reconvened for January 30.

In its current form, the bill proposes that the first round of elections be held in October 2023, with a potential second round to be held in December 2023. Accordingly, the new head of state would be sworn in on January 1, 2024, and finish their mandate on July 28, 2029, while parliamentarians would begin their mandates on December 31, 2023, and conclude on July 26, 2029.

### **Boluarte's bills for early elections and constitutional reform**

On January 29, in an address to the nation, de-facto President Boluarte requested the Congress to approve the bill presented by legislator Guerra García. She also announced that if the parliament does not reach a consensus to advance the general elections to 2023, the government will immediately present two urgent bills: the first for the elections to be held in October and the second seeking the "total reform" of the Constitution through the Legislature, instead of a Constituent Assembly as demanded by the majority of Peruvians.

“I announce that if the consensus in Congress does not prosper to advance the elections to 2023, the Executive will immediately present two bills, the first to debate a constitutional reform so that the general elections are held inevitably this year, 2023, the first round in October and the second, if applicable, in December,” said Boluarte.

Regarding the second bill, Boluarte said that “I am proposing that the next elected Congress entrust the Constitution Commission with the total reform of the 1993 Constitution. This bill fits perfectly into the expectation of the other sector of Congress that also wants to make political reforms through a constituent assembly.”

For many of the protesters on the streets, Boluarte’s proposal falls short, as she still refuses to resign. Lucía Alvites of the New Peru party said, “The exit from this crisis Ms. Dina Boluarte is only possible with your resignation, because no one with your political responsibility and almost 60 Peruvians killed, can continue in office. Stop the political acrobatics to try and make this illegitimate Congress solve this. Resign and face justice.”

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)

