

# Peru declares state of emergency, seeks 18-months jail for Castillo

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**The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk:** Peru announced a nationwide state of emergency on Wednesday, granting police special powers and limiting freedoms including the right to assembly, after a week of fiery protests that have left at least eight dead. The protests were sparked by the ousting of former President Pedro Castillo on Dec. 7 in an impeachment vote. Castillo, a leftist elected in 2021, was arrested after illegally trying to dissolve the Andean nation's Congress, the latest in a series of political crises the world's second-largest copper producer has faced in recent years. Prosecutors on Wednesday said they were seeking 18 months of pretrial detention for Castillo, who has been charged with rebellion and conspiracy. Peru's Supreme Court met to consider the request but later suspended the session until Thursday.

Castillo's former vice president, Dina Boluarte, was sworn into office after his removal, and her presidency has divided other Latin American leaders. The political upheaval has sparked angry and sometimes violent protests around the Andean country, especially in the rural and mining regions that propelled the former peasant farmer and teacher to office in July last year. Eight people, mostly teenagers, have died in clashes with the police, authorities have said. At least six were victims of gunfire, according to rights groups. Protesters have blockaded highways, set fires to buildings and invaded airports. "We have agreed to declare a state of emergency throughout the country, due to the acts of vandalism and violence," Boluarte's defense minister, Alberto Otarola, told reporters. This requires a forceful response from the government," he said, adding that it would mean the suspension of certain freedoms, including the right to assembly and freedom of transit, and give authorities the ability to enter homes without a warrant. Boluarte, speaking to reporters from the presidential palace, called for peace and said "we can't have a dialogue if there's violence between us." She said elections could be moved forward further to December 2023 from April 2024, a date she had pledged earlier. The vote is currently slated for 2026 when Castillo's term would have ended.

Boluarte's government also spoke with a slate of officials from the region Wednesday, likely looking to shore up international support as the leader has faced criticism from Latin American leftists such as Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. The Peruvian foreign minister, Ana Cecilia Gervasi, said she spoke Wednesday with her counterparts from Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Ecuador. The previous day, Boluarte had met with a number of European ambassadors. Since his arrest, Castillo has been detained at the DIROES police facility in Lima. He called on supporters to come to the jail, saying he should be released after the initial seven-day period of pretrial detention expired Wednesday. "I await you all at the DIROES facilities to join you in a hug," Castillo said in a hand-written message posted on Twitter, signing it as the "Constitutional President of Peru." Castillo has denied charges of rebellion and conspiracy.

Castillo also called for the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to intercede on his behalf, and dozens of supporters gathered at the prison demanding he be freed. However, sources from the prosecutor's office and analysts said Castillo cannot be released while the Supreme Court resolves the prosecutors' request. Peru's judiciary said on Twitter it would hold a hearing by Friday on a "request for pretrial detention for 18 months against former president Pedro Castillo and (former Prime Minister) Anibal Torres, investigated for the crimes of rebellion and others."