

July 26, 2023

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our serious concerns about growing threats to human rights, democracy, and rule of law in Peru. In particular, the lack of accountability for Peruvian security forces responsible for the disproportionate and lethal use of force against anti-government protestors in recent months reflects the underlying corruption and impunity that has undermined Peru's democracy and contributed to widespread political disillusionment. Given the importance of the U.S.-Peru relationship and the depth of bilateral ties, we believe that the United States has a responsibility to actively work with Peru's leaders and civil society to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations are held accountable and to support a political reconciliation process to build a stronger, more representative democracy. Failing to stand up for human rights and accountability at this inflection point in Peru's democratic history will only exacerbate insecurity in the region, embolden undemocratic actors, and increase irregular migration.

Peru has experienced a prolonged period of political instability and polarization, having had six presidents in six years. Following former President Pedro Castillo's attempt to illegally dissolve Peru's Congress and rule by decree, and his subsequent removal from power by Peru's Congress, thousands of Peruvians took to the streets to call for early elections. Many of the protesters were rural and Indigenous people from marginalized regions of the country who face higher rates of poverty and discrimination and lower access to public services. In the face of these protests, Peruvian officials insinuated that the demonstrators were criminals and terrorists and responded with excessive and lethal force, resulting in the death of at least [49 civilians](#) and injuring many more. However, the Peru's Ombudsperson described the protestors as being largely peaceful. Therefore, the excessive and lethal force of violence likely violates Peruvian and international law on necessity and proportionality. These incidents have been well documented by the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights \(IACHR\)](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), and [Peruvian civil society groups](#).

Months after, the Peruvian government has yet to take meaningful steps to hold the perpetrators of these abuses accountable. Given the persistent political instability in Peru and reports that protests and demonstrations against the government will continue, it is crucial that the United States re-affirms that our bilateral relationship depends on strong commitments to the rule of law and the upholding of the right to peaceful protest and to free speech.

In addition to the continued lack of accountability for Peruvian security forces, we are concerned that the Peruvian Congress and parts of the Peruvian government have sought to undermine democratic institutions during this period of crisis. In May 2023, Peru's Congress replaced Peru's acting ombudsperson, Eliana Revollar, who had spoken out against the government's villainization of protestors, in a rapid and opaque process that undermined the important independence of this body. Congress then chose as new ombudsperson, a former member of Congress with no experience or expertise on human rights. Additionally, the

Peruvian Congress replaced six of the seven members of Peru's Constitutional Tribunal in a [process](#) that lacked transparency and clear criteria for the selection of candidates. We are concerned that such actions will cause further popular disillusion with Peru's democracy and deepen legislative overreach.

Given the closeness of the U.S. relationship with Peru and the Biden Administration's dedication to protecting human rights and bolstering democracy in the Americas and globally, we urge the State Department to take the following actions aimed at supporting Peru's democratic resilience:

- Provide support as necessary to Peru's Attorney General's Office and other investigative bodies in order to ensure thorough, prompt, and impartial investigations of human rights violations.
- Support the establishment of an Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts in Peru (GIEI-Peru), as recommended by the IACHR in its May 3 [report](#), modeled on successful efforts in Mexico and Bolivia, that would provide legal and technical assistance to investigate and prosecute human rights violations.
- Coordinate with the U.S. Department of Defense to temporarily cease joint exercises or cooperation with units of the Peruvian security forces alleged to be responsible for human rights violations, conduct an investigation into whether such units of the Peruvian security forces have received security assistance from the United States and, upon any determination that any such units of the Peruvian security forces have received security assistance, restrict further assistance as consistent with United States law.
- Publicly express strong support for independent national electoral institutions and agencies and for efforts to address public discontent with governance and the lack of new elections.
- Emphasize the importance of strong democracy, human rights, and anti-corruption efforts in high-level bilateral engagements and discussions.
- Coordinate with USAID to support efforts that respond to the root causes of demonstrators' discontent by promoting good governance, combating corruption, and addressing the longstanding marginalization of Indigenous people in rural areas.

We hope the Biden administration will see the urgent imperative in supporting Peru's democracy and the Peruvian people during this crucial time.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress

CC: Ambassador Lisa D. Kenna, U.S. Embassy in Lima