

Third Peruvian transport strike raises demand for end to Boluarte regime

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On Wednesday, October 23, a mass strike took place against the government of President Dina Boluarte and the Peruvian Congress. This marked the third consecutive strike led by public transport workers.

The immediate catalysts for the strike were the lack of transportation safety arising from organized crime syndicates that extort fees and even murder people who do not comply with their demands, and the failure of Congress to carry out promises for reform it made after the first two strikes.

Striking transport organizations—the National Association for the Integration of Transporters (ANITRA), the National Alliance of Transporters, and the National Coordinator of Multisectoral Struggle—which include transport line operators, owners of buses and minivans, as well as bus drivers, are demanding the shelving of bills related to so-called urban terrorism, and the repeal of Law 32108, relating to organized crime.

Law 32108 stipulates that a lawyer must be present when police raid a suspect's home. It was previously modified in response to the prior strikes to allow the presence of a lawyer appointed by the Public Ministry, but it continues to serve as a protective measure for extortion mafias and corrupt congress members.

Compared to previous strikes, the demands on October 23 raised significant political questions. Protesters called for the resignations of President Dina Boluarte, Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen, Minister of the Interior Juan José Santiváñez, and members of Congress. Additionally, there was a demand for early elections.

In addition to the transport organizations that organized the strikes on September 26 and October 11 and 12, other organizations joined in the October 23 strike. These included the Gamarra and Mesa Redonda business associations, representing micro and small enterprises—known by the Spanish acronym of (mypes)—and the National Organization of Relatives of the Victims of the Massacres of 2022 and 2023.

In working class districts, grocery stores, pharmacies and restaurants have remained closed due to the current strike, while taxi drivers have stood in solidarity with the transport workers. University students also joined them.

Protesters gathered at various locations: some departed from

Puente Piedra, and others from the Carabayllo district in northern Lima. Additionally, participants marched from the Ate district, located east of the city, and from Ventanilla in El Callao.

They all converged at Plaza Dos de Mayo, a site of historical significance known for massive working class demonstrations throughout the last century.

Social media showed the demonstrations as several blocks long, obstructing the Panamericana Norte highway and causing significant traffic chaos. The protesters then continued through the streets of Lima's historic center on their way to Congress.

Students from the National University of San Marcos (UNMSM), Federico Villarreal University, National Agrarian University La Molina (UNALM), National University of Engineering (UNI), and Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP), among others, arrived at Av. Abancay, where Congress is located.

The government deployed 13,000 police and 800 reinforcements from Puno to prevent any “disorder.” They were armed with live ammunition, batons, and pepper spray. The Army was also present in Lima's historic center, blocking many of the streets leading to Congress.

After confrontations with the police, the students retreated to Plaza San Martín and remained there until late at night.

Unlike the previous strikes, which primarily focused on Lima, the October 23 strike took place simultaneously in various cities.

In the northern coast, it included Tumbes, Piura, Chiclayo, and Huacho; in the central highlands, Huancayo and Huánuco; in the southern Andes, Arequipa, Juliaca, and Cusco; and Tacna, a city near the Chilean border.

In Juliaca, the protests were led by the mothers of the youth who were killed following Dina Boluarte's assumption of the presidency after former President Pedro Castillo was ousted and jailed in a US-backed parliamentary coup.

Responding to the October 23 strike, Interior Minister Juan José Santiváñez claimed that efforts to combat citizen insecurity had already yielded results.

His remarks were quickly contradicted the day after the latest strike, on October 24, when hitmen in working class neighborhoods around Lima killed eight people. The mayor of

the Ate District has blamed the Interior Minister for these deaths, stating that “the state of emergency has failed.”

Workers must grasp the immense dangers posed by the reactionary character of the policies pursued by the strikes’ leadership. While seeking to pressure Congress into acting against extortionist mafias and citizen insecurity, it remains silent on the critical questions underlying the current crisis, such as social inequality, the impoverishment of the working class through unemployment and low wages, and the high rate of failed (mypes).

Rather than advance any independent political struggle by the working class, this leadership, dominated by petty employers and businessmen, particularly in public transportation, seeks the strengthening of the National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces, which will be used to suppress any uprising by the workers, students and other oppressed layers of the population.

Even bourgeois political analysts recognize that the state of emergency, the presence of armed forces in the streets, and the repeal of laws against organized crime will not effectively combat criminal organizations.

This raises the question: what will the ruling class response be? The law on urban terrorism, which draws inspiration from the Patriot Act in the US, makes it clear: the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois State will be strengthened and unleashed against workers and the most oppressed layers of Peruvian society.

For example, Legislative Decree No. 1589, published on December 4, 2023, which amended Article 315 of the Penal Code, criminalizes roadblocks and penalizes support for protesters, including funding for those traveling to Lima for demonstrations.

The rise of protection racket mafias that use hitmen to coerce bus drivers, passengers (mainly drawn from the working class), teachers, construction workers and grocery store owners into paying fees is the result of complex socioeconomic processes. It is primarily driven by rising social inequality, which has its sharpest impact among youth aged 15 to 29, 40 percent of whom neither work nor study. A resulting sense of abandonment and helplessness creates an environment where young people become easy targets for mafias looking to recruit and train individuals for robbery and murder.

Workers must reject the state propaganda portraying the youth abandoned by the ruling class and its state as criminals. That notion arises from the sensationalist way the bourgeois press depicts the wave of assaults and murders in the streets, workplaces, and buses.

Also fueling social inequality has been the 1993 Fujimori Constitution, which was written to provide foreign capital and their national junior partners unfettered conditions for the pursuit of profit. To attract investment, this constitution, imposed under the dictatorial regime of President Alberto Fujimori, severely undermined the rights of the working class, allowing employers to hire outsourced workers to avoid labor-

related costs, and granting them the authority to terminate workers’ contracts quickly.

The Fujimori Constitution encourages the worker-to-entrepreneur model, fostering the growth of micro and medium size enterprises (mypes). A micro-enterprise employs between 1 and 10 workers, while a small enterprise employs 11 to 100 workers. (Mypes) play a crucial role in the economy, representing 96.4 percent of all companies, and accounting for 45.9 percent of the economically active population (EAP).

Instead of calling for the deployment of police and soldiers, workers must build a leadership that relies on the power of the working class.

The three strikes did not include mobilization of the industrial working class, except for the construction sector. Construction workers are extorted from 500 soles (US\$133) to 1,000 soles (US\$267) per month, and construction companies 1 to 2 percent of the construction cost.

Peruvian construction unions themselves often behave like mafias competing for representation at construction sites. This rivalry has led to violent confrontations, where hitmen are hired to kill union leaders. From 2011 to 2024, 24 construction leaders met their deaths at the hands of hitmen.

According to 2010 statistics, Peruvian industry employs 1.75 million workers and, indirectly, 3.55 million workers. The main obstacle the industrial working class faces in terms of mobilizing its independent strength is posed by the treacherous ex-Stalinist leadership of the General Confederation of Workers of Peru—Confederacion General de Trabajadores del Perú (CGTP).

The CGTP deceitfully supported the strike on October 23, aiming to keep it trapped within the confines of the bourgeois state. Instead of addressing burning issues concerning the working class, it merely criticized “the legislative branch for failing to improve the legal framework needed to combat organized crime.”

The struggle to mobilize the full power of Peruvian working class against the increasingly intolerable conditions of life requires a break with the treacherous leadership of the CGTP and its pseudo-left defenders and the building of a new revolutionary leadership, a Peruvian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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