

Thousands of Peruvians March Against Fujimori Pardon and Call for New General Elections



Lima, December 29 (RHC) - Thousands of Peruvians marched on Thursday to protest the president's recent pardoning of former authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori, calling for new general elections as a graft scandal ensnares established politicians.

The demonstrations capped a head-spinning week in which President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski warned about a new rise of Fujimori's authoritarian movement, only to pardon him three days later after Fujimori's loyalists in Congress saved him from an impeachment bid.

Waving Peruvian flags and chanting "down with the corrupt," protesters called the pardon payback for keeping Kuczynski in power.

"I'm marching against this outrage, this insult that we feel now that the dictator Fujimori has been pardoned," said Milagros Reboyo, a 26-year-old university student at a march in Lima.

The Christmas Eve pardon cleared Fujimori's convictions for graft and human rights abuses 12 years into a 25-year prison sentence, and shields him from a pending trial for a 1992 death squad massacre.

In Lima, the march was largely peaceful. But police fired tear gas at protesters who veered from the permitted route to march in front of Kuczynski's house in the financial district.

The pardon has deepened the disgust that many Peruvians feel toward mainstream politics, after a graft scandal involving Brazilian builder Odebrecht has ensnared two former presidents in the past year.

Kuczynski and opposition leader Keiko Fujimori, Fujimori's daughter, are also under investigation for their ties to Odebrecht. On Thursday, the two separately underwent questioning by prosecutors investigating Odebrecht's partners in crime. Both deny any wrongdoing and have promised to cooperate with investigations.

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