

PERU IN PERIL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRY

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With the [killing of 17 civilians and one police officer](#) on Monday amid anti-government protests, the month-long political crisis in Peru has crossed a bloody threshold and could trigger more waves of violence. The incident shows not only the barbarity of the country's security personnel in dealing with protests, but also the [failure of President Dina Boluarte](#) and of [her predecessor Pedro Castillo](#) in uniting and stabilising the country during the periods they have been in power. The crisis is the result of a power struggle between Mr. Castillo and Congress. Mr. Castillo, a former school teacher and a trade unionist, was elected President in 2021 on promises such as ensuring political stability, fighting corruption and addressing chronic inequality. But without any administrative and political experience, Mr. Castillo found it hard to negotiate the maze of Peruvian polity. As he struggled to get a grip on governance, a hostile Congress and the wealthy classes lined up against him. Corruption scandals and alleged links with criminal syndicates weakened Mr. Castillo's position in Lima. Congress voted to fire him twice, but failed to garner enough support. As a third vote was due in December last year, Mr. Castillo made the drastic announcement of dissolving Congress, which also triggered his impeachment.

But if Mr. Castillo, currently in jail, miscalculated the consequences of his decision to dissolve Parliament, his successor and legislators misjudged the leftist leader's support among the poor. Violent protests broke out in Peru's highlands demanding Mr. Castillo's restoration or early elections. Mr. Castillo called Ms. Boluarte "usurper", while his supporters said the president they voted for was not allowed to complete his legitimate term, which was to expire in 2026. At least 47 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in protests, ever since Mr. Castillo was ousted. As she came under enormous pressure, Ms. Boluarte promised to hold elections by April 2024 (pending approval from Congress), but this was dismissed by Mr. Castillo and his supporters, leaving the country in disarray. Both sides have a hand in the current crisis and should come together to find a way out. Restoring Mr. Castillo may not be practically and constitutionally possible, but Ms. Boluarte's government could release him from prison in return for peace. To end the current impasse, the government, the opposition and Congress should agree on the earliest possible date for fresh elections. Peru's political class should also be ready for broader constitutional reforms that allow the presidency and the legislature to function without confrontation.

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