

Peruvian politician Keiko Fujimori used students as 'ghost contributors' to launder money and finance campaign



Lima, November 6 (RHC)-- In Lima, the Peruvian capital, thanks to a group of university law students, Congress member Keiko Fujimori is now under investigation for allegedly receiving \$1.2 million in illicit funds from Brazilian construction company Odebrecht for her 2011 presidential run.

A group of law students at the Universidad Jose Carlos Mariategui in Lima began looking into campaign contributions to the 2011 Fujimori electoral bid in 2015 as part of a thesis project.

After extensive investigation led by then-student David Apaza, he and four other pupils found that things didn't add up between donor profiles' and their contributions. Apaza told local media that over 100 contributors were between 22 and 28 years old who had hefty student debt themselves.

For example, Maria Castañon, who was a university student in 2011 with a debt of 10,000 Peruvian soles (nearly \$3,000 USD) contributed over \$11,800 to Fujimori's campaign that year.

"What's more, in one day she made two contributions of more than 17,000 soles (> \$5,000) each," stresses Apaza who is now a lawyer. "We asked her about the contribution she told us that he did not know anything about," he added.

"That's when we realized that several, at least 100 people, appeared as 'ghost contributors', says Apaza.

Apaza and his fellow students wrote a formal letter to public prosecutors in Peru's southern city of Arequipa where, according to local media Maria del Pilar Peralta, sat on the evidence for two years until it was picked up by state prosecutor Jose Domingo Perez in August 2017.

Perez now says the defendant and her accomplices created at least 1,000 'ghost contributors' and raffled off cars as prizes to cover up the laundered money Keiko's party, Popular Force, received from Odebrecht.

Perez just managed to have Keiko put in 36 months of preventive detention to prevent her flight while he finishes investigating her case. Fujimori has yet to be sentenced.

Keiko's father, the former authoritarian leader of Peru who was sentenced to serve a 25-year prison sentence for crimes against humanity, was forced back to prison earlier this month after he was granted house arrest by former President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski last December.

Kuczynski was removed from office last March after Congress declared him unfit for the post. This second vote regarding the president's aptitude came after Keiko's brother, Kenji, himself a national legislator, blackmailed other lawmakers to vote to keep Kuczynski in office in exchange for Fujimori senior's pardon.

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