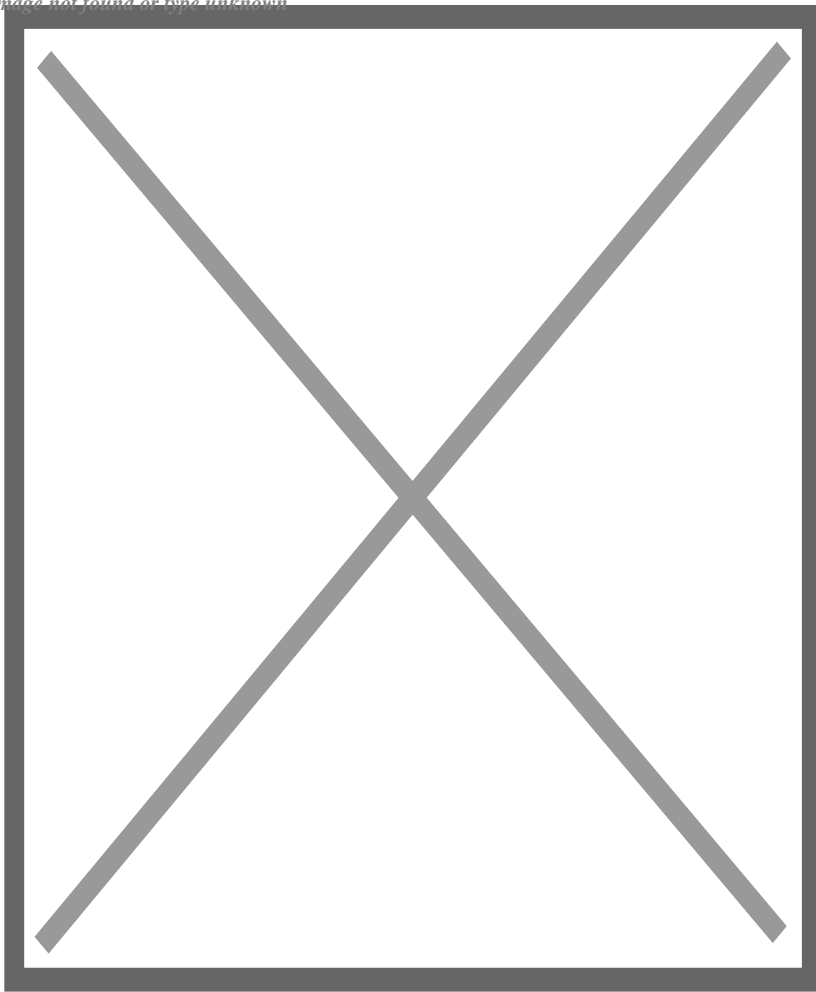


Peru recalls ambassador to Mexico amid row over ousted leader

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Peru's designated-president Dina Boluarte at a press conference at the government palace in Lima, Peru [File: Martin Mejia/The Associated Press]

Lima, February 25 (RHC)-- Peru's designated-president Dina Boluarte has ordered the "definitive removal" of the country's ambassador to Mexico after rebuking Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador for again voicing his support for her overthrown predecessor.

The move comes after Lopez Obrador told a news conference on Friday that "Mexico will continue to support [Castillo] who was unjustly and illegally removed from office." Lopez Obrador, who has been one of Castillo's most fervent supporters along with the governments of Bolivia, Argentina and Colombia, also referred to Boluarte as a "spurious president."

Castillo was impeached and arrested on December 7th last year after seeking to dissolve Congress. He was replaced by then-vice president Boularte the same day.

Announcing the ambassador's withdrawal in a televised address, Boularte said "diplomatic relations between Peru and Mexico are formally reduced to the level of charge d'affaires". She added that Lopez Obrador has "decided to support the coup d'etat carried out by the now former president Pedro Castillo on December 7, 2022."

"I strongly reject the remarks made today by the president of Mexico on Peru's internal affairs and his repeated unacceptable questioning of the constitutional and democratic origins of my government," she said.

Peru had already expelled the Mexican ambassador to the country at the end of December, after Mexico granted political asylum to Castillo's wife and two sons.

Castillo's removal has led to weeks of protests that have left at least 60 people dead, according to Peru's ombudsman's office. Boularte's government has been criticised for violently cracking down on the demonstrations led by supporters of Castillo, who has maintained a strong base among poor rural voters and disenfranchised Indigenous groups.

Boularte initially said she would stay in office until Castillo's term ended in 2026, but the vote was later moved up to April 2024. She has since supported moving the vote to December 2023, however, efforts to do so have repeatedly failed in the country's deeply divided Congress.

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