

Hundreds Take to the Streets of Lima to Protest Kuczynski's Pardon of Fujimori



Lima, December 25 (RHC-Agencies) -- Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski pardoned former authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori late on Sunday, triggering Christmas Eve street clashes as protesters denounced the decision as part of a political deal.

Hundreds of demonstrators flooded the streets of Lima, carrying signs that read "pardon is illegal" and "illegal pardon is impunity".

Kuczynski's decision clears Fujimori of convictions for human rights crimes and graft when his right-wing government was in power from 1990 to 2000.

At least two ministers in Kuczynski's cabinet who objected to the pardon told him they wanted to resign, and Kuczynski might reshuffle the cabinet as early as this week, according to news reports.

Kuczynski, a former Wall Street banker who vowed as a candidate not to pardon Fujimori, based his decision on a medical review that found Fujimori suffered from "a progressive, degenerative and incurable disease", according to a statement from the president's office.

Late on Sunday, Fujimori was taken to hospital from prison by ambulance to treat a drop in blood pressure and abnormal heart beat.

But many in Peru saw the pardon as part of a quid pro quo. Three days earlier, Fujimori's loyalists - led by his lawmaker son Kenji - unexpectedly saved Kuczynski from a vote in Congress that nearly removed him from office.

Police fired teargas at scores of Fujimori's opponents in downtown Lima, who waved pictures of the victims of a bloody counterinsurgency campaign during his term.

Officers in riot gear stood guard at Kuczynski's house in the capital's San Isidro financial district as protesters called for the march to make its way there.

Fujimori was extradited back to Peru in 2007 and later found guilty of commanding death squads that massacred civilians, bribing lawmakers and having a hand in the kidnapping a journalist, among other crimes.

His eldest daughter, Keiko, leads the opposition party Popular Force that controls Congress, while his son Kenji has courted ties with Kuczynski's government as he challenges his sister's past decade of leadership of their father's following.

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