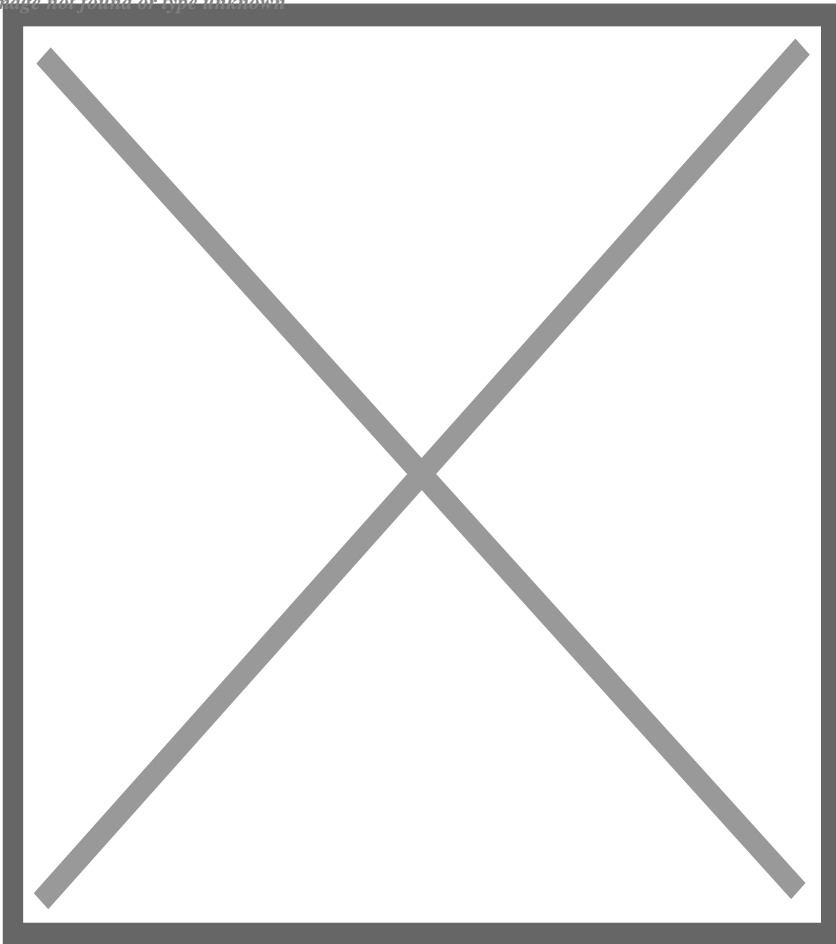


Peru judge extends Pedro Castillo's jail time by 18 months

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Pedro Castillo's arrest on charges of 'rebellion' and 'conspiracy' has fuelled a political crisis?

Lima, December 16 (RHC)-- A judge in Peru has granted a request to extend former President Pedro Castillo's imprisonment for 18 months, as the authorities make their case against him on accusations of "rebellion" and "conspiracy." The decision is expected to further inflame political turmoil and protests that have swept across the South American nation since Castillo's impeachment and detention last week.

Protesters have demanded the embattled leader's release from prison, as well as new elections and the removal of his successor, former Vice President Dina Boluarte. Boluarte's administration declared a nationwide state of emergency on Wednesday, suspending freedom of movement and assembly in a bid

to quell the unrest, which has left at least 13 people dead so far.

In Thursday's ruling, a judicial panel within the Supreme Court ruled that Castillo, initially jailed for seven days, will remain behind bars as prosecutors continue their investigation into the criminal charges against him. The decision did not touch on the merits of the accusations faced by Castillo but a judge heading the panel cited the risk of flight by the former president.

Castillo has rejected the accusations against him, saying he is being "unjustly and arbitrarily detained" at a police facility near the capital, Lima. Earlier this week, he called on his supporters to come to the prison to demand his release and urged the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to intercede on his behalf.

"Enough already! The outrage, humiliation and mistreatment continues. Today they restrict my freedom again with 18 months of pretrial detention," Castillo wrote in a message posted on Twitter. "I hold judges and prosecutors responsible for what happens in the country."

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