

## PERU: Impeachment scenarios

The opposition *Fuerza Popular* (FP) party led by Keiko Fujimori in the early hours of 8 March confirmed its unanimous support for President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski's impeachment. Four FP legislators added their support to an impeachment motion activated by smaller opposition parties. The motion now has more than the 26 signatures needed to advance to the next stage of the impeachment process, and will therefore be formally filed today. However, the FP also announced that it will make a final decision over whether to back impeachment once Kuczynski has undergone questioning before a congressional commission (controlled by the FP) that is investigating Odebrecht-related corruption, which is scheduled for 16 March. Kuczynski's position remains very precarious, but the FP – whose support is essential for impeachment to go ahead – is not as solid as it was a few weeks ago, and his removal is not inevitable.

### Impeachment process...

The impeachment process is as follows: 20% of Congress (26 legislators) needs to sign the initial motion. With the four FP signatures obtained last night, the motion has 29 backers, ten each from the two left-wing groups, Nuevo Peru (NP) and the Broad Front (FA), plus others from smaller outfits. To progress to a plenary debate, the support of 40% of Congress (52) is needed. A vote must then take place within the subsequent three to ten days. A two-thirds majority (87 votes) is then needed for impeachment to take place; recall that in December, this final step fell eight votes short.

### ...and how the numbers stack up

There have been two important changes since December. First, the NP, which abstained in the first impeachment vote, now firmly backs Kuczynski's removal. Second, the FP has now lost 12 legislators (Kenji Fujimori's Avengers), who will support Kuczynski (or abstain) in any impeachment vote. Having started out with a 73-strong bloc, the FP as led by Keiko now numbers 59. How many of these could potentially defect to the Avengers is uncertain, but could be in the region of ten. That would leave Keiko with a 49-strong bloc. If that bloc backs impeachment after 16 March (as is likely), then there would be roughly 74 votes prepared to impeach the president, certainly enough for the second stage, but still short of what is required to actually remove Kuczynski. If Keiko retains those ten possible waverers, then the total increases to 84, just shy of the magic 87.

### Variables

How the 'Keiko versus Kenji' dispute evolves in the coming days will be key to Kuczynski's chances of survival. The risk for Keiko is that if she backs impeachment and it flounders, it would be a major setback for her leadership, so she may yet retreat. Kuczynski's performance on 16 March will be critical; allegations that companies he founded received funds from Odebrecht when he was a minister are serious.

Public opinion, meanwhile, continues to turn against Kuczynski; according to the latest poll, 63% think he should go, up from 53% in February. Whether legislators from smaller parties such as the Alliance for Progress (APP – eight seats) and Popular Action (AP – five seats) are swayed more by

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public opinion than they are by inducements from the president will also be critical.

If impeachment does proceed, unlike in December, the parties now accept First VP Martin Vizcarra as Kuczynski's successor, as per the constitution.

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