

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article9025>



Panama

Panama is the epicenter of the struggle in Latin America

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP605 - June 2025 -

Publication date: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

A small country of four million 200 thousand inhabitants is showing Latin America and the world that it is possible to confront the interests of financial capital and vulture funds in the third decade of the 21st century.

Just a couple of days ago, the blood of a twelve-year-old indigenous boy, seriously injured by government repression, showed that the conflict was entering a new stage. A little before that, Saúl Méndez, main leader of the powerful construction union had to seek asylum in the Bolivian embassy to avoid being presented as a trophy and placed in prison, something that already happened with two other of its leaders, Genaro López and Jaime Caballero, who have been sent to the worst prison for common criminals in that country, a union to which the previous government had already confiscated its membership dues, a measure that the new president continued to maintain, even with recent raids of its union headquarters and the closing of its cooperative. Thousands of striking teachers have been removed from the payroll and many others have been illegally placed on permanent unpaid leave.

This is taking place in the midst of an impressive global media siege corresponding to the one inside the country, which creates an information curtain that prevents the social movement and the people of the world from knowing what is happening in the small Central American country.

The origin

In 2023, after a period of rising struggles of the teachers' movement and workers as a whole in Panama, the most important popular ecological rebellion in the world so far in the 21st century took place. After weeks of mobilization and paralyzation of the country, led by teachers, construction workers, banana workers, indigenous communities, youth, women, environmentalists, communities and a broad swath of the middle class, a decision was obtained from the Supreme Court of Justice ordering the cessation of operations of the transnational First Quantum and the closure of the mine that had generated the popular revolt. This judicial decision overturned the spurious agreement reached in the Panamanian parliament, which sought to prolong the environmental destruction of the environment.

Such counter-march of the public powers is caused by the fear of the Panamanian bourgeoisie to the popular ecological rebellion that had happened to close the most important transportation routes of the country, affecting the profits of sectors of the capital. An unprecedented ecological victory occurred.

The reaction of the Panamanian bourgeoisie and finance capital was to adopt in 2024 the presidential candidacy of José Raúl Mulino, former Minister of the Interior in the corrupt Martinelli administration and the darling of Mr. Motta, the tycoon of the Panamanian airline industry, media and other business operations. His agenda, to build a new political situation that would allow to regain the pre-ecological rebellion domination, expand the profits of finance capital in that country and fulfill the neo-colonial agenda of an imminent new Trump administration in the White House.

The novelty of the election of President Mulino was the arrival in parliament of a large group of independent deputies, who had taken advantage of the wave of the popular revolt to make room for themselves. This parliamentary renewal, which showed the intention of the electorate to produce a new political situation, was quickly betrayed by half of this new parliamentary fraction who quickly reached an agreement with the reactionary government of Mulino who, elected with only 34% of the votes, lacked a parliamentary majority.

This new correlation of forces allows him to advance in the approval of Law 462, which produces a new regression in the retirement and pension regime of the Panamanian working class, which goes from a retirement with approximately 60% of their salary to 30% or less. It also allows Panama's wealthy families to manage the pension funds and these enter into financial market speculation. In addition, President Mulino announces the intention to reopen mining and re-enable First Quantum, bypassing the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice. The indignation was installed in all the territories of Panama.

To make matters worse, the arrival of Trump to his second term in office comes with a clear intention to return to the situation of control of the Panama Canal, something that finds the approval of the Mulino government, which signs an agreement to enable the reopening of three U.S. military bases, despite the fact that Panama by constitutional provision has no army and that a treaty in force between the two countries had established since late 1999 the end of such foreign military presence. Thus a situation of vassalage of the government of that country is configured, a fact that ends up initiating a new cycle of protests.

Five weeks of the national strike

The first to declare a strike on 23 April were the teachers, who announced that they would not return to the classrooms until Law 462 (pension and retirement system) was repealed, the closing of the mining industry was guaranteed and the military memorandum of understanding with the United States was annulled. On this occasion, the progressive phenomenon of thousands of fathers, mothers and families in schools and colleges decided in assemblies to support the strike of their children's teachers. Once again, mobilizations of high school students reappear, since in the eighties their associations by school had been suppressed by Noriega, while the University of Panama is the epicenter of meetings, declarations, gatherings and a mega march, in spite of the inexplicable stain of the expulsion by the authorities of a student for actions of struggle and the attempts to turn the house of study into a "space of negotiation" and not of the decisive action in favor of patriotic indignation.

Daily mobilizations of teachers and professors, together with the entry into the conflict of the banana workers and the powerful construction union, have generated the incorporation into the struggle of entire populations in the interior provinces of the country. This increased the quality and number of demonstrators, which led Mr. Mulino's government to unleash a repression unprecedented in recent decades against the social movement. Hundreds of people injured and arrested daily did not stop the protests, on the contrary, they increased them.

When the indigenous communities entered the conflict, the repression was merciless, especially against women and children of the native peoples. The balance of a 12 year old minor and a university student seriously wounded by the bullets of a government that has publicly said that it does not care if its popularity is at -50%, when polls were released that placed citizen approval of its mandate at less than 10%, reveals that we are facing an iron fist government that seeks to inflict a defeat on the social movement that will allow it to get rid of its main organizations in order to advance its nefarious plans.

This week the conflict enters a decisive stage, while the government is playing a delaying game in order to wear itself out, hoping that the protests will die down in the next few days. However, everything indicates that the mobilizations will be followed by the paralyzation of the country, for which it is necessary to multiply the voices of international solidarity.

The correct method

The Alianza Pueblo Unido por la Vida (People United for Life Alliance), the social movement coalition driving the protests, has built a broad social front to confront Mulino's neoconservative and neocolonialist offensive.

The teachers', trade union, environmental and community unions show that the correct path is to go beyond sectoral struggles and build alliances between nationalist, patriotic forces that defend the working class, in order to generate a broad participation of the populations to advance in the struggles and defeat financial capital, extractivist policies and North American neocolonialism.

The Panamanian bourgeoisie: between the voracity of financialization and the fear of explosion

Social. The contradiction that the Panamanian bourgeoisie has again, as in 2023, is to decide between the voracity of the financial capital that is after the pension funds and mining investments or the stability of the bourgeois regime itself. For that reason, they have bet on a crushing of the revolt, via manu policial, but if they do not succeed in doing so, they would have to decide between backing down or losing control.

Increasingly, the association of those at the top, the powerful and wealthy, has less and less contact with the people and concentrates on the propaganda of the media they own. How long this situation will last is the key question.

Revocation of presidential mandate

An intermediate solution that is beginning to resonate in the streets is the possibility of revoking the presidential mandate and calling for new elections, but this has the legal obstacle that this revocatory action has never been regulated. However, the law initiatives to make this happen continue to advance and take course, with growing sympathy from the citizens.

Mulino's dismissal has another legal course: that the Assembly of Deputies attends to the accusation presented by the Alianza Pueblo Unido (United People's Alliance) for violating the international personality of the State, due to the surrendering Memorandum that allows the reopening of US military bases. If the levels of community participation of 2023 are reached, it could configure a new correlation of forces that would allow to open a trial against the current president, based on the norms established in the Panamanian Constitution.

This would make it possible to reverse Law 462, leave without effect the reopening of mining and annul the Memorandum that has allowed the reopening of U.S. military bases. But this can only happen within the framework of sustaining and expanding the popular mobilizations. Therefore, the next hours will be key for the course of events.

The need to promote international solidarity

In the midst of this dramatic situation, a broad and plural international solidarity is required from the democratic and progressive forces, the social and educational movement at the international level. We cannot leave the Panamanian people alone in this hour.

For this reason, the social movement has launched, among other important initiatives, a worldwide **campaign of protest and delivery of declarations of solidarity with the struggle of the Panamanian people, in front of the Panamanian embassies and consulates in each country, on 9 June 2025**. This would allow to begin to break the media siege that the big news agencies have configured and establish an important network of communication and alternative solidarity.

2 June 2025

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.