

# Corruption in Latin America

Many Latin American countries have been plagued in recent times by corrupt officials at the highest levels of government. This illustration identifies twelve of the most egregious examples from ten Latin American countries.



**President José Daniel Ortega Saavedra**  
Nicaragua

Ortega has served in his second term as president of Nicaragua since 2007. He was formerly the leader of the communist Sandinista National Liberation Front that overthrew the Nicaraguan government in 1979. Nicaragua is now experiencing a virtual civil war, largely stemming from widespread popular dissatisfaction attributed to Ortega's alleged nepotism and corruption. His repressive measures aimed at putting down political opposition have converted him into a de facto dictator who now rules Nicaragua through repressive measures allegedly including overt violence, censorship, arrest and torture of political opponents, and rule by decree. (Photo courtesy of the Presidential Office of the Republic of China)



**Former President Enrique Peña Nieto**  
Mexico

Nieto served as president of Mexico from 2012 to 2018. His term as president was marked with claims of corruption, with allegations of media manipulation and reports of his wife accepting a luxury home from a government contractor. The disappearance of forty-three students from police custody in 2014 created domestic and international outcry and added to his domestic unpopularity. (Photo courtesy of the Office of the President of Mexico)



**Former President Otto Pérez Molina**  
Guatemala

Pérez was president of Guatemala from 2012 to 2015, when he resigned in the face of a massive bribery scandal. Twenty-six other people, including former vice president Ingrid Roxana Baldetti Elías, were also charged. Pérez is being held in pretrial confinement. He has also been accused of multiple human rights abuses. (Photo by Michael Wuertenberg/World Economic Forum)



**Former President Rafael Correa**  
Ecuador

Correa served as president of Ecuador from 2007 to 2017. Allegations of corruption by the former president include involvement in an attempted kidnapping of opposition lawmaker Fernando Balda. He now resides in Belgium, while Ecuador is seeking his extradition on the kidnapping claims. Additionally, Ecuadorian Vice President Jorge Glas, who served under Correa and current president Lenín Moreno, was sentenced to six years in prison in 2017 for his involvement in Brazil's Odebrecht construction company scandal. (Photo by Micaela Ayala V., The News Agency of Ecuador and South America)



**Former President Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz**  
Cuba

Although he stepped down as president in 2018, Castro remains the head of the Communist Party and the armed forces of Cuba. Following the communist takeover of Cuba in 1959, Castro's brother, Fidel, issued a series of decrees directing the confiscation of private property and money. Subsequently, the one-party state form of government imposed by Fidel and carried on by Raul Castro have institutionalized government corruption in the form of nepotism, unaccountable state monopolies, illicit trafficking in drugs, and rampant cronyism. (Photo courtesy of the Presidency of the Mexican Republic)



**Former President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard**  
Peru

Kuczynski was president of Peru from 2016 to 2018. He resigned in March 2018 just prior to a vote on impeachment for permanent moral unfitnes. Kuczynski faced corruption charges based on his association with Brazil's Odebrecht construction company, which is itself facing a huge corruption scandal. (Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru)



**Former President Cristina Elisabet Fernández de Kirchner**  
Argentina

Kirchner was president of Argentina from 2007 to 2015. On leaving office, Kirchner faced a host of charges in court including manipulating currencies for her own benefit, illicit association, rampant corruption within her administration, and personal obstruction of justice and high treason with regard to a case involving reputed Iranian bombing of a Jewish center in Buenos Aires. (Photo courtesy of the Office of the President of Argentina)



**Former President Hugo Chávez**  
Venezuela

Chávez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998 and served until his death in 2013. He quickly took control of all branches of the government and the army. He replaced Venezuela's National Assembly and its supreme court, and then used them to rewrite its constitution to allow him to remain in power indefinitely, effectively changing Venezuela from a democracy to a dictatorship. (Photo by Roberto Stuckert Filho, Agência Brasil)



**President Nicolás Maduro Moros**  
Venezuela

Maduro has been president of Venezuela since 2013. Under Maduro's presidency, large sectors of the economy have been nationalized and placed under the control of Maduro's cronies with the consequence that the economy of the state has collapsed, inflation is running at nearly 1 million percent, almost three million economic refugees have fled the country, the oil industry has deteriorated to the point that the country with the largest oil reserves in the world is now importing oil, drug cartels and criminal organizations affiliated with international crime and terrorism have gained control of the military and government administration, and Cuba has been allowed to seize control of Venezuela's internal security and intelligence system. Maduro has eliminated the democratically elected branches of government, packed the high court with cronies, and now rules virtually by decree. (Photo by Fabio Rodrigues Pozzebom, Agência Brasil)



**Former President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva**  
Brazil

Lula served as president of Brazil from 2003 to 2011. He was convicted of corruption and money laundering and sentenced to twelve years in prison in January 2018. (Photo by Roberto Stuckert Filho, Agência Brasil)



**Former President Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria**  
Chile

Bachelet served as the first female president of Chile from 2006 to 2010 and from 2014 to 2018. Her previous popularity plummeted in 2015 when it was revealed that her son, Sebastián Dávalos, and daughter-in-law, Natalia Compagnon, had allegedly used insider information to make over \$5 million on a real estate deal. In 2016, Compagnon was charged with tax fraud due to her involvement in the scandal. (Photo courtesy of the Government of Chile)



**Former President Dilma Rouseff**  
Brazil

Rouseff was handpicked by Lula as his successor and served as the first female president of Brazil from 2011 to 2016. She was caught by a wiretap attempting to shield Lula from prosecution, and was subsequently charged with criminal administrative misconduct for her failure to act on corruption uncovered during the Operation Car Wash investigation and with disregard for the federal budget for funding programs without the required legislative approval. Rouseff was impeached and removed from office in 2016. (Photo by Roberto Stuckert Filho, Agência Brasil)