

## Peru's Christ of the Pacific: What Lima wants or a presidential ad?

By [Beatrice Ciabatti](#)



Peru's Alan García next to El Cristo del Pacífico, one of about 60 projects the outgoing president will inaugurate in his final 40 days. By Peruvian law he may run again in 2016. (Photo: Sepres)

President Alan García is ready to inaugurate approximately 60 projects in his last 40 days of government, amongst them we have one that everyone in Lima is talking about: the controversial "Christ of the Pacific." This monument is 37 meters high and was placed in the Morro Solar, a hill in Chorrillos overlooking the Pacific sea.

It will display of 20 different color lights to illuminate the Christ statue depending on the occasion: In October, for example, purple will be used in celebration for El Señor de los Milagros.

The project has been financed by a business trust from Brazil and President García has put 100,000 soles of his personal savings. The president explains his policy: if a foreign company makes money in the country, it should also perform projects for the country; this is why a year ago the construction of the statue started.

The Cristo del Pacífico, as it is known here in Peru, will be inaugurated on June 29 amongst the baffled look of many Limeños who still can't make their minds about the questionable taste of such an imposing statue.



The Christ Statue overlooks Lima's Pacific coastline. Financing was provided by the Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht. (Photo: AFP)

In fact, part of the conflicts that have arisen amongst Limeños that dislike the statue is that they haven't been consulted whether they want a statue that resembles Brazil's Cristo del Corcovado. Lima's Mayor Susana Villarán criticized President García by saying she was not consulted and that private donations should go to people that are suffering from cold in Puno. The fact is that former Mayor Luis Castañeda Lossio and the Ministry of Culture gave their approval for the construction 18 months ago.

What to do? So used to the polls after this last electoral period, Ipsos Apoyo made a poll for El Comercio asking Limeños about their approval of the statue. The result: 51% approve and 37% disapprove of Cristo del Pacífico, yet 43% think that the source of the money that finances this monument comes from unclear negotiations between the president and Brazilian business that participated in the construction. On his side, President García invites anyone who wants to dispel his doubts, to form a commission of inquiry to investigate the affidavits for the period 2001-2005.

But still we must understand that 51% of citizens believe it is a wonderful monument, symbol of our Christian faith that embellishes the Morro solar and will attract more tourists.

As you can see there are many conflicting opinions about the Cristo del Pacífico and yet I must count myself amongst the baffled Limeños that when looking at the statue can't make up their minds whether it is an icon of serenity and kindness or whether it is a tactic of president Alan García to self promote himself for the 2016 elections!



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