

Institutional crisis in Bolivia should be resolved peacefully, through constitutional measures, respecting international human rights standards

Washington, D.C. and La Paz, November 13, 2019 – On Sunday, November 10, President Evo Morales announced his resignation following three weeks of an acute political crisis, violent confrontations, and acts of vandalism perpetrated by both government sympathizers and the opposition. Yesterday Jeanine Añez, the second vice-president of the Senate, temporarily assumed the position of President. Her main job is to **convene free and transparent elections and to guarantee that all measures carried out leading up to the election respect the Constitution and international human rights standards.**

Following a peaceful election on October 20, the Organization of American States (OAS) Election Observatory Mission and civil society organizations that were monitoring the election reported a series of irregularities that raised doubts about the veracity of the results announced by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. A subsequent external audit confirmed that there were grave irregularities and manipulation of the data, which affected the official vote tabulation.

While various civil society groups, grassroots organizations, and public institutions condemned the electoral fraud and demanded Morales' resignation, it concerns us that he only agreed to resign after the Commanders of the Armed Forces and National Police issued a "recommendation" to this effect. **Bolivia and Latin America have a well-known history of military seizures of power**, which has often been accompanied by systematic violations of human rights. **The Armed Forces should concentrate on those tasks that are appropriate for the military and abstain from any type of influence on the political deliberation process.**

The [crisis in Bolivia](#) derives from, among other factors, the abnormal actions of the electoral justice system, as well as a steady **deterioration of the autonomy and independence of the Judicial Branch and other checks and balances of the State**. DPLF has [monitored](#) the [selection process of high court judges](#) and other [judicial officials](#) in Bolivia, and published [studies](#) and [analyses](#) noting the weakness in the nomination processes and the submission of certain judicial entities to the political power. The clearest evidence of this tendency is the November 2017 decision by the Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal recognizing the "human right" of Morales to participate in a fourth election and to be reelected indefinitely, even though the citizenry had rejected this idea in a referendum in February of 2016.

To reestablish institutional normality in Bolivia, there must be new, free, just, and transparent elections, but also a strengthening of the nomination and selection processes of those who occupy positions in the institutions that impart justice. Therefore, it is crucial to **establish immediately a new Supreme Electoral Tribunal**, through a process that is transparent, participatory, and based on the merits, appropriateness, and political impartiality of the members, in compliance with applicable international standards.

Finally, we remind the interim officials that **unrestricted respect for the human rights of all persons without any kind of discrimination, and strict compliance with the constitutional framework and international human rights standards**, are essential conditions for a peaceful transition that does not feed into the heightened political and social polarization currently experienced by Bolivian society.

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