

Coup regime in Bolivia announces “final phase of pacification”

By Andrea Lobo
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The Bolivian Congress, controlled by the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party, voted unanimously in favor of an agreement with the far-right regime that overthrew MAS president Evo Morales to call new elections.

The deal bans Morales’s participation, which he had already agreed to. It also enacts a 20-day period to elect a new electoral body, as demanded by the US government and the Organization of American States (OAS)—which operates as an extension of the US State Department.

Candidates for the electoral body will have eight days to be inscribed, and approved by the parliamentary Mixed Constitutional Commission, which is led by the Senator Óscar Ortiz of the right-wing Democrat Unity (UD) party. The vague time frame provided indicates that elections need to be carried out by April 23.

Following the congressional approval of the deal, self-proclaimed “interim president” Jeanine Áñez (UD) announced the “final phase of the pacification process” and canceled a decree granting the military blanket impunity for its criminal repression.

These measures, complemented by MAS’s whitewashing of the repression by requesting that victims be compensated economically, have been taken in response to an ebbing of the mass protests.

No major roadblocks or marches have been reported by the press and social media since mourners carrying caskets of those killed by the military were harassed by tanks, gassed and attacked with rubber bullets in La Paz on November 22.

Impoverished workers, peasants and youth have resisted the coup with enormous bravery. But this movement has been marked by the absence of a revolutionary political leadership independent of the MAS and trade unions, which have totally submitted to the coup. While the protests against the regime and the brutal economic policies that it has been installed to enforce are only beginning, the lack of leadership has allowed economic hardship and repression to temporarily halt the upsurge.

At the same time, the MAS, a bourgeois nationalist party, has facilitated the efforts of the corporate press and the international far right to legitimize the coup and the continued crackdown. For instance, the Peruvian novelist and

right-winger Mario Vargas Llosa boasted ~~Sunday~~ in “Bolivia is calm, waiting for new elections approved unanimously (yes, unanimously) by the Chamber of Deputies as much as the Senators, with the enthusiastic votes—believe me, please, as much as it may seem a lie—of the MAS legislators, Evo Morales’s own party.”

Vargas Llosa went on to claim that even the MAS recognized Morales as a “dictator” who attempted an electoral fraud on October 10—even though no evidence has been provided to support this allegation—and to suggest that state forces are not responsible for the killing of protesters. He concludes that all international opposition to the Bolivian coup is “racist” for being “spellbound” by the “zoo monkey” Morales.

Since the coup, at least 32 demonstrators have been killed and hundreds have suffered injuries. On November 15 in Sacaba, a mass march was met by gunfire, even from helicopters, killing nine and leaving dozens injured.

Then, on November 19, protesters occupying a refinery in Senkata were driven out by state forces using live ammunition, killing 10. Videos and bullet holes at the scene have exposed the use of machine guns by the military.

Evo Morales declared on Wednesday that an Interpol “Blue Notice” had been issued for him across 10 countries, including Mexico, where he was granted asylum. The warrant involves efforts to monitor and retrieve information for an undisclosed investigation. This was confirmed by the Bolivian Public Ministry. Several MAS officials granted asylum in the Mexican embassy in La Paz are being prosecuted for supporting “terrorism.”

Attacks on the media have also been widespread. On Wednesday, *Grayzone* journalist Wyatt Reed reported that a left-wing journalist in Bolivia with whom he had scheduled an interview had been arrested that day and interrogated at an unlisted facility. Then, the Bolivian journalist went into hiding. The Bolivian government announced that the broadcaster *RT* (Russia Today) would be shut down in Bolivia on December 2.

On Friday, the interim interior minister threatened a delegation of trade union and social organizations: “We will not allow any local to do terrorism in Bolivia and much less a foreigner. We recommend those foreigners arriving to light the country on fire to watch out. We are watching and following

you... the first step toward terrorism/sedition will face the police.”

The day after canceling the impunity law, the government founded the Special Anti-Terrorist Center (CEAT), a militarized elite unit as part of the Santa Cruz police with the stated task of “searching for the components of terrorist cells.”

The “interim” regime headed by Áñez has moved swiftly to realign Bolivia’s foreign policy with the interests of US imperialism, restoring diplomatic relations—broken under the Morales government—with both Washington and Israel, while breaking ties with the government of President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela and expelling Cuban doctors providing care in the most impoverished areas of the country.

On Sunday, the Argentine daily *Página12* published an interview with Pascuala Condori Quispe, a street vendor near La Paz, who supports nine sons and daughters. In tears, she said that they are scrambling to find “54,000 pesos” (\$7,830) for her nephew’s medical expenses after he suffered serious injuries during the repression. “False cops came to kick open our doors,” she added. “They told us that we had to leave due to looting. Afterward they shot us mercilessly.” Amid shots, beatings, tear gas by “real and false officials,” women were ordered to strip and kiss the shoes of their attackers.

The same ruling circles that have directly organized these attacks were also behind the economic sabotage and assaults against peasants in 2008 demanding “autonomy” for Santa Cruz and four other departments. Just as today, there was strong evidence of US involvement, which led Bolivia to expel US Ambassador Philip Goldberg for meeting with Santa Cruz governor Rubén Costas and other right-wingers.

Despite a few prosecutions against those responsible for the 2008 Porvenir Massacre of 13 peasant MAS supporters and the expulsion of Goldberg, Morales granted greater freedoms for these departmental authorities and continued to grant fiscal benefits and permits for greater exploitation for big agriculture and mining. It was this expanded economic power and the ability to continue their scheming with imperialist agencies that opened the door for the coup last month.

More broadly, however, the drop in the prices of gas, soy and other commodities, and the escalated US reaffirmation of its stranglehold across Latin America, mostly through its military and intelligence apparatus, destabilized the confluence of relations between international and national forces upon which the Morales regime rested.

Only the revolutionary expropriation of the landed oligarchy, the banks and the gas and mining sectors, the dismantling of the military and police and setting up of worker and peasant militias, while appealing to the working class across the Americas to mobilize to defend and expand these conquests could have fulfilled the popular demands paid for with blood in the mass protests between 2000 and 2005 that elevated Morales to power.

However, Morales, representing the interests of the national

bourgeoisie, did everything possible to suppress the revolutionary strivings of the masses with the help of the trade unions and pseudo-left forces, which created illusions in his partial nationalizations and expansion of democratic rights for the indigenous majority. Meanwhile, higher commodity prices and commercial overtures to Chinese and European capital allowed for greater wealth for the national bourgeoisie and increased appropriations for the military.

Now, Costas, the right-wing Santa Cruz governor, is able to take the political center stage and appeal for an anti-MAS coalition to consolidate the far-right regime in the elections next year, which will be overseen by the military special forces and fascist gangs. Meanwhile, the “interim president” Áñez is taking steps to pardon Leopoldo Fernández, the ringleader behind the Porvenir massacre.

General Williams Kaliman, who called for Morales’s resignation as chief of the Armed Forces, attended the Pentagon’s Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly known as the School of the Americas, and served as military attaché to Washington under Morales, developing intimate ties with the US military and intelligence apparatus.

Despite measures of social austerity and deregulation imposed by Morales, which would be praised by the International Monetary Fund under normal conditions, US imperialism demanded more exclusive control over Bolivia’s strategic resources—in opposition to that of China or Russia—while it lost confidence in the ability of Morales to continue suppressing the class struggle as poverty has bounced back since 2014 and amid mass upheavals internationally.

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