

Ms. Michelle Bachelet
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais Wilson
Quai Wilson 47
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

Friday, 15 November 2019

Subject: Coup d'état in Bolivia: Implications, consequences for the exercise of human rights and a call to action

Dear Madam High Commissioner:

We write this communiqué on behalf of various organizations representing different social sectors and regions of the world, which have in common the objective of fighting for the promotion and protection of human rights and respect for the basic principles of democracy and justice.

We are writing to you urgently to request that you take a firm and public stand on the civil-military coup d'état underway in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. We also ask you to take all necessary measures to help put an end to the serious human rights violations that are occurring in the country and to prevent the situation from degenerating into a spiral of uncontrolled violence, with catastrophic consequences.

It is public knowledge that on the afternoon of Sunday, November 10, the commander of the Bolivian Armed Forces, Williams Kaliman, alleging a suspicion of electoral fraud, "suggested" President Evo Morales resign his constitutional mandate. This call was made, even though President Morales had already complied with the result of the preliminary report of the Organization of American States (OAS) on alleged irregularities in the October 20 elections, and expressed his willingness to organize new elections.

Shortly thereafter, President Morales and his vice president announced on television their resignation, denouncing that what was happening was "a civic, political and police coup" and that they were leaving office to protect the families of their political allies, whose houses were burned down, and to prevent further violence. Also resigning were the president of the chamber of deputies and the president of the chamber of senators, as well as several government ministers and other officials of the governing MAS party. According to the news we received, these people were victims of violence and threats, including the burning of their homes.

On Tuesday, November 12, in flagrant violation of Bolivia's constitutional order, opposition Senator Jeanine Áñez proclaimed herself president of Bolivia, without complying with established constitutional requirements, and announced new elections.

According to information we have received, a worrying wave of hatred and political violence is passing through the country. Attacks against indigenous peoples, campesinos and human rights defenders are multiplying. Armed groups go from house to house looking for political opponents. Various types of human rights violations are taking place, affecting broad sectors of the population. Numerous people,

including women, children and the elderly, have denounced violations of their rights to freedom, security and personal integrity, freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, and peaceful assembly. Some cases of violations of the right to life were also reported.

We have also received reliable information on violations of the human rights of the families of diplomatic representatives in the foreign service, who fear for their safety and suffer from difficulties returning to their country.

The political turmoil and the limitations of fundamental freedoms resulting from the coup have also hindered the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the rights to education, health, food and water, affecting the most vulnerable segments of the population.

In view of this serious situation, we are concerned that the High Commissioner has not yet made a pronouncement on the acute political and social crisis that Bolivia is going through. In a context in which the armed forces have taken political control of the country, international human rights bodies play a fundamental role in their protection -- and must act. Ignoring the context of accelerated militarization in the political life of the continent will have serious consequences for the Bolivian people and for the legitimacy of human rights organizations.

In this context, while we are aware of the enormous political pressures that hinder the work of your Office, we consider it urgent that you, in line with your mandate, take a firm and public stance with regard to the coup d'état under way in the country. It is vital to prevent patterns of repression such as extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression, and indiscriminate raids and attacks on homes. Respect for the rule of law and the basic principles of democracy are fundamental conditions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The United Nations invited the High Commissioner to "play an active role in removing existing obstacles and addressing challenges to the full realization of all human rights and in preventing the persistence of human rights violations throughout the world, as reflected in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action."

For its part, according to the mission statement, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) must work for the protection of all human rights of all persons. According to the declaration, it is committed to:

- give priority to addressing the most urgent cases of human rights violations, both acute and chronic, in particular those that imminently endanger people's lives; and
- focus attention on those at risk and vulnerable on multiple fronts.

You are well aware of the serious, massive and systematic violations of human rights that military dictatorships have committed in the past in the region. It is crucial to preserve democracy and restore constitutional order in Bolivia. It is urgent to guarantee the life and personal security of all government representatives and supporters, inside and outside the country, as well as respect for the right to self-determination of the Bolivian people.

Considering the aspiration of all peoples to an international order based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the promotion and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in conditions of peace, democracy and justice, **we urge you, Ms. Bachelet, as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, in line with and in compliance with your mandate, to:

- strongly condemn the human rights violations that are taking place in the Plurinational State of Bolivia as a consequence of the coup d'état of 10 November 2019;
- call for an immediate end to all violations, unconditional respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the restoration of democracy and the rule of law;
- urge all agents and institutions to refrain from resorting to violence and to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the right to life, freedom of movement, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
- invite all states to provide the necessary international protection to all those who have been threatened or who have a well-founded fear of persecution, ensuring their right to seek asylum or refuge in accordance with international law;
- closely monitor the situation in Bolivia, including sending an observation mission to the country;
- take all necessary measures to ensure that all acts of violence and serious human rights violations committed in the context of the coup d'état are investigated independently, impartially and in compliance with due process; and
- take all additional measures it deems necessary for the safeguarding of human rights, peace and democracy in the State of Bolivia.

We, the undersigned organizations, trust in your determination and courage. We remain entirely at your disposal and thank you in advance for your attention to this important and urgent issue. We ask you to keep us informed of the measures taken in this regard.

We take this opportunity to express to you our feelings of highest consideration and esteem.

Yours sincerely,

The following organizations with Consultative Status at the United Nations sign the letter:

Asociación Americana de Juristas (AAJ)

Asociación Internacional de Juristas Demócratas (IADL)

Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)

Centre Europe – Tier Monde (CETIM)

Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos A.C.

Federación Democrática Internacional de Mujeres (FDIM)

FIAN International

Fundación Latinoamericana por los Derechos Humanos y el Desarrollo Social

Society for International Development (SID)

Transnational Institute (TNI), NL

Unión Nacional de Juristas de Cuba (UNJC) – Cuba

The following organizations without Consultative Status also sign the letter:

Actuar - Associação pra a Cooperação e o Desenvolvimento - Portugal

African Bar Association

ALTSEAN - Burma

Amigos de la Tierra América Latina y el Caribe (ATALC)

Asociación Civil Nace Un Derecho

Asociación Q'ukumatz - Guatemala

Asociación Venezolana de Juristas - Venezuela

Associação Brasileira de Juristas pela Democracia (ABJD) - Brasil

Centro de Atención a la Familia Migrante Indígena - CAFAMI A.C. (México)

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos “Segundo Montes Mozo S.J.” (CSMM) - Ecuador

Cine Migrante, Argentina

Comisión Argentina para Refugiados y Migrantes (CAREF) (Argentina)

Confederation of Lawyers of Asia and the Pacific (COLAP)

Corporación Solidaridad Jurídica - Colombia

Crisálida, biblioteca popular de género y diversidad afectivosexual, Tucumán, Argentina

Dialogo 2000 Jubileo Sur Argentina

Droit Solidarité, France

Encuentro de Profesionales contra la Tortura

European Coordination of La Via Campesina (ECVC)

FIAN Brasil

FIAN Ecuador

FIAN Honduras

FIAN Suecia

FOCO Inpade

Foro de Abogados/as de Izquierdas (FAI-RAD) - España

Giuristi Democratici (GD) - Italia

Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers – UK

Hellenic Union of Progressive Lawyers – Greece

IndustriAll Global Union

Instituto de Estudios y Divulgación sobre Migración A.C. (México)

Instituto de Justicia y Derechos Humanos – UNLa

La Via Campesina (LVC)

Matria, Instituto sobre Cuestiones de Género – Tucumán, Argentina

Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens (MAB) - Brasil

Mundubat - España

National Association of Democratic Lawyers in South Africa (NADEL) - South Africa

National Lawyers Guild (NLG) - USA

National Union People Lawyers (NUPL) - Philippines

Nouvelles Alternatives pour le Developpement Durable en Afrique (NADDAF) - Togo

Oficina Ecumenica por la Paz y la Justicia

PODER, México & LATAM

Progress Lawyers Network - Belgium

Progressive Lawyers Association (CHD) - Turkey

Red europa de Comités Oscar Romero

Red Jubileo Sur America

Solidaridad Suecia – America Latina (SAL)

Sures - Venezuela

Terra de Dereito

Ukrainian Association of Democratic Lawyers - Ukraine

Unión de Juristas Saharais (UJS) - Western Sahara

Unión Verapacense de Organizaciones Campesinas UVOC - Guatemala

World March of Women

CC

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