

Canada on the Wrong Side of Bolivia's Fight to Restore Democracy

By [Arnold August](#)

Global Research, August 12, 2020

Region: [Canada](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

The Trudeau government, in concert with the Trump administration and right-wing regional governments throughout Latin America, was instrumental in the 2019 coup against Bolivia's first Indigenous leader, Evo Morales.

Now [debunked claims](#) of “irregularities” during the October 20 elections were used as a pretext for the crisis after the Washington, DC-based Organization of American States (OAS) conducted an audit showing results from the unofficial, preliminary vote count failed to secure Morales a first-round victory. In response, Canada said it would support the coup administration of Jeanine Añez, a far-right Christian fundamentalist. In 2013, Añez [tweeted](#),

“I dream of a Bolivia without satanic indigenous rituals, the city isn't made for indians, they need to go back to the countryside!”

On October 22, Canada was among those countries calling on the Permanent Council of the OAS to hold a special meeting on Bolivia. It took place two days later. The meeting provided the US Representative and Ambassador to the OAS, Carlos Trujillo, an opportunity to repeat the narrative of [“fraudulent” elections](#). At the same meeting, [reported CommonDreams](#), the OAS—which gets [60 percent of its funding](#) from the US government—[refused](#) to allow Jake Johnston, an analyst from the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), to present the organization's [preliminary response](#), which accused the OAS audit of making blatant distortions regarding the October election.

On October 29, Prime Minister Trudeau posted a photo of himself with right-wing, Pinochet-era Chilean President Sebastián Piñera. A [readout](#) from the meeting indicated that the

“Prime Minister and the President exchanged views on key regional issues, including the importance of addressing people's concerns around economic opportunity and inequalities. Prime Minister Trudeau also shared his concern about election irregularities in Bolivia. They welcomed the collaboration between Canada and Chile on a range of shared priorities, including efforts to address the crisis in Venezuela.”

That same day, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) [issued a statement](#) about “irregularities” during the Bolivian election, building “on the preliminary conclusions of the OAS Electoral Observer Mission which found that the electoral process did not comply with international standards.”

After organized violence by Bolivia's rightist opposition forced the president and his

Movement for Socialism (MAS) out of power, Morales resigned on November 10 and fled the country for Mexico. Subsequently, GAC [issued a statement](#) lauding the work of the OAS's Electoral Observer Mission, concluding that the “will of the Bolivian people and the democratic process were not respected.”

The next day, President Trump joined the chorus, [adding](#) that the resignation of Morales represented “a significant moment for democracy in the Western Hemisphere.”

Canada followed suit. On November 14, GAC spokesperson John Babcock confirmed that Canada will work with the new interim administration—as long as it followed up on its commitment to [hold new elections as soon as possible](#).

Following the coup, the situation in Bolivia changed overnight. The minority white, largely Christian elite stormed to power, removing the Indigenous Wiphala flag as the dual symbol of the country, and enabling the repression of MAS supporters in the streets.

In effect, the coup in Bolivia represents a concerted effort by the US-backed right-wing opposition to roll back the advances championed by Morales's anti-imperialist government, and reinstall the power of the minority white elite. All of this was accomplished through brutal violence. In [less than two weeks after the coup](#), 32 people were killed in protests, with more than 700 wounded.

On November 15, police and military forces [opened fire](#) on anti-coup protesters in Cochabamba (one of the nine departments of Bolivia), killing at least nine people and wounding many more. The Hospital México in nearby Sacaba received so many wounded protesters that it was treating victims outside the hospital building, exceeding its capacity. On November 19, [eyewitnesses reported](#) a military massacre at the Senkata gas plant in the Indigenous city of El Alto, and the tear-gassing of a peaceful funeral procession on November 21 to commemorate the dead:

In the Vinto municipality, one of the most disturbing attacks took place. An opposition mob, armed with sticks and stones and explosives, attacked the mayor's office... The attackers set fire to the city hall and assaulted mayor Patricia Arce, of the MAS party. Arce was dragged down the street and forced to walk barefoot several kilometers. The attackers cut her hair and sprayed red paint on her body. They also abused and insulted her and forced her to say that she would leave office.

Meanwhile, the pretext of “fraudulent elections” was being questioned and refuted. The aforementioned CEPR report—co-authored by Guillaume Long—[directly challenges](#) the contention that the elections were fraudulent.

In addition, researchers from MIT's Election Data and Science Lab, [John Curiel](#) and [Jack Williams](#), published a fully documented report in the *Washington Post* indicating clearly that [there was no fraud](#). The *New York Times* [echoed these findings](#).

However, the OAS, the US and Canada did not acknowledge any of the revelations.

Now, the de facto government led by Áñez has postponed elections [three times since March](#) of this year.

Why is the coup government refusing to hold elections? According to polls, the leading MAS candidate, Luis Arce, would obtain 31.6 percent of the vote, followed by 17.1 percent for former president Carlos Mesa. Añez, on the other hand, is supported by just 16.5 percent of Bolivians.

Despite calls from Canada and the US demanding elections “as soon as possible,” neither country has released any statements condemning the coup government for its inaction. Bolivia’s largest unions and social movements are currently leading a general strike to demand that the original election timetable be respected.

In the words of Bolivian journalist Ollie Vargas, who has been reporting from the country since shortly after the coup, the regime is currently “mobilizing paramilitary groups to attack protesters” in three regions.

Bolivia’s anti-coup uprising has been raging for a week. The regime is mobilizing paramilitary groups to attack protesters in 3 regions. However, the police & military have been almost absent (apart from in one small town). Lots of rumours that police are refusing to be deployed

— Ollie Vargas (@OVargas52) [August 9, 2020](#)

More recently, on August 9, *Kawsachun News*—the English language service of Radio Kawsachun Coca, a Cochabamba-based station of the National System of Original Peoples’ Radio (RPO), which was promoted by former President Morales—reported that Añez’s government is threatening to launch a wave of paramilitary attacks on pro-democracy protests.

Bolivian coup leader Fernando Camacho threatens to launch a wave of paramilitary attacks on pro-democracy protests. He’s ordered the regime to crush the protests immediately. If they fail to, he will mobilize the violent extremist groups that led the protests against Evo Morales. pic.twitter.com/I97w9T9rHG

— Kawsachun News (@KawsachunNews) [August 9, 2020](#)

In response to the delay of general elections and the interim government’s failure to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, [more than 70 blockades](#) have been organized by social groups and labour unions loyal to Morales.

So far, the Trudeau government has remained silent on the delayed elections, despite taking an active role in supporting the coup government and the OAS report last year. What right does Canada have to intervene in Bolivia’s internal affairs? What can we do here to oppose the Trudeau government’s policies in Latin America?

To address these questions, the Canadian Latin America Alliance and Canadian Foreign Policy Institute are co-organizing a talk for August 12 on Bolivia’s fight to restore democracy and Canada’s role. The event features former foreign minister of Ecuador, Guillaume Long,

NDP MP Matthew Green, and Bolivian journalist Ollie Vargas. Register [here](#). The event is sponsored by *Canadian Dimension*.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Arnold August is a Montreal-based journalist and the author of three books on Cuba, Latin America, and US foreign policy. His articles have appeared in English, Spanish and French in North America, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East, including occasional contributions to Canadian Dimension where [this article](#) was originally published. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Featured image: Protest in Buenos Aires, Argentina against the coup in Bolivia, November 2019. Photo by Santiago Sito/[Flickr](#).

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Arnold August](#), Global Research, 2020

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Arnold August](#)
<http://Guillaume>

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca