

Indigenous Leader Evo Morales Ayma Re-elected in Bolivia

By [Eva Golinger](#) and [Maria Elena Parada](#)

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Indigenous Leader Evo Morales Ayma: "I will work together with the people to promote development, unity and integration in Bolivia"

Last Friday, after being officially sworn in as President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for a second term, 2010-2015, Evo Morales said he would move towards a socialist model.

Evo Morales was inaugurated into his historical second term as President of Bolivia, this past Friday, January 22, in the building of the first Plurinational Legislative Assembly in La Paz. He was accompanied by the presidents of Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Venezuela, the Prince of Spain, Felipe de Borbon, and delegations from Canada, France, Peru and Brazil, amongst others.

"For the nation and for the Bolivian people, I swear in as president of the Plurinational State of Bolivia", said the indigenous leader Evo Morales Ayma, as he received the presidential sash, which now includes the Wiphala Indian Flag, a symbol of Bolivia's indigenous communities.

A MULTICULTURAL STATE WITH A SOCIALIST HORIZON

In his speech before the Bolivian nation, Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera affirmed that this second term, "will mark the end of the Apparent State and give way to an Integrated State with a socialist horizon, somewhere between a Colonial State and the new Plurinational State we are building".

He explained that the Apparent State was unable to represent the totality of the population, but rather only an isolated fragment; "it excluded the indigenous majority, its culture, its heroes and its political role. Bolivia should move towards an Integrated State, where there is correspondence between civil society, citizens, social classes and political representation...where there is moral and intellectual leadership, and politicians that unite us all", he said.

Garcia Linera expressed his thanks to the indigenous, farmer and student movements in the country that have led the process of revolutionary change, "Bolivia was able to become a just State, a true participatory democracy, where indigenous communities and mestizos (mixed race peoples) are included in a unified way".

THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE HAS BEEN KEY

“During the four years I’ve been at the head of government, I have learned a lot about the wisdom of the people with whom I’ve maintained permanent contact”, proclaimed the exuberant Bolivian president. In his presidential address, Evo Morales compared the achievements during his first term, in which a process of social transformation began with a high level of popular participation, to those of governments before. He said he always “wanted to work for equality, unity and dignity in Bolivia, and it hasn’t been easy to govern with an opposition that uses all the tools and strategies possible to destabilize democracy and overthrow a government that seeks to end injustice”.

Several times during his first term, opposition forces tried to overthrow the Bolivian president through an attempted coup d’etat, separatist proclamations and movements, political violence and economic sabotage.

Morales emphasized the improvements in education, the building of new schools and the implementation of a more accessible higher education system with scholarships to study abroad during his administration. He also explained how the healthcare system had improved during the past four years and the foreign debt was reduced by 50%. While minimum wage had only be raised by 10 bolivianos during the previous administration, during Evo’s first term the basic wage was raised by more than 230 bolivianos. There was more foreign investment, a doubling in job creation, a big surge in the GNP and an increase in the reserves of more than six times than past administrations.

President Morales also detailed the importance of the social and political changes achieved during his first four-year term. “January 22 is a key date for me”, said the Bolivian president. “Not only is it inauguration day, but when I was a deputy in the legislature, I went on a hunger strike to oppose certain government policies one January 22”. The government at the time, “ordered all the bathrooms in the congressional building to be sealed off, so I couldn’t use them”, he added. “That was how they got me out of the building”.

“When I left, I said, I’ll be back, with at least 10 more assembly members. Never did I imagine that I would be back, but with 115 assembly members”, he exclaimed. Evo Morales’ party, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), won 115 of 157 seats in the legislature last December, a clear majority.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND JUDICIAL REFORM

Referring to the priorities during his second term, President Morales mentioned the need to improve food sovereignty and security, as well as “promote a revolution in the judicial system so that justice ceases to be controlled by the powerful and the Law is applied to all citizens”.

“We will also focus on industrialization, not just gas and oil, but also lithium, which requires millions in investments that will be opened to private partners. The exploitation and industrialization of iron will be developed in El Mutun, located on the border with Brazil, and not just with the Indian company Jindal Steel, but also with State investments”, he indicated.

Bolivia is one of Venezuela’s closest political, commercial and social allies in the region. Both are members of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA) and plan to expand relations in the near future.

Evo Morales is the only indigenous president in the world today and the first ever in Bolivia,

a nation 80% indigenous. Last December, he won the presidential elections with more than 64% of the vote, the largest win ever in Bolivia's history.

Eva Golinger is the distinguished winner of the 2009 International Award for Journalism in Mexico. She is a Venezuelan-American attorney from New York, who since 2005 has been living in Caracas, Venezuela. She is the author of such best-selling books as "The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela" (2006 Olive Branch Press), "Bush vs. Chávez: Washington's War on Venezuela" (2007, Monthly Review Press), and "The Empire's Web: Encyclopedia of Interventionism and Subversion." She is also the editor-in-chief of the English edition of the Correo del Orinoco International. Her work can also be consulted at her blog, Postcards from the Revolution.

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