

Members of Argentine Delegation in Bolivia Tell the Horror They Recorded (Coup Repression)

They collected testimonies of disappearances, murders, rapes. And they were threatened by the de facto government

By [Orinoco Tribune](#)

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“They opened Pandora’s box and hatred came out,” they write. Government Minister Arturo Murillo publicly threatened them: “Be careful, we are watching you.”

“This government has unleashed a huge racial hatred. They opened pandora’s box and a thousand demons came out who are expressing themselves in situations of profound violence,” says jurist Luis Arias, one of the members of the Argentine delegation that traveled to Bolivia. On Thursday, a group of forty social and human rights leaders arrived in the neighboring country with the aim of preparing a record of the deaths and abuses suffered by the population since the coup d’etat against Evo Morales was consummated.

Disappearances, murders, arbitrary detentions, rapes, torture and hospitals that refuse to take care of those wounded by the repression were some of the events recorded during the first day of work. They were held and kicked at the airport by a pro-coup mob. Then the Minister of Government of Añez, Arturo Murillo, came out to threaten them publicly:

“Be careful, we are watching you.”

From the moment they stepped on Bolivian soil, the delegation -composed of Juan Grabois (CTEP), the lawyer Roberto Carlés, Pablo Pimentel and Mauricio Rojas (APDH), Victoria Freire (Observatory of Gender and Public Policies of the City), Daniel Catalano (ATE), Marianela Navarro (FOL), Sergio Smietniansky (CADEP), among many others – had to face the attacks, threats and misgivings of the de facto government of Jeanine Añez.

On Thursday night, the members of the delegation arrived at the airport of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, to connect with another flight to La Paz. Upon arrival, the Bolivian police detained them, separated them from the rest of the travelers and identified, by name and surname, 12 of the members of the entourage and took them to another room to interrogate them.

“They were waiting for us,” Carles said and added: “They selected the people whose names had appeared in the press and subjected them to an interrogation.” “They started asking us about our plans in Bolivia, where we were going to go and who we were going to visit. They treated us with great hostility and after a few hours they let us go,” said Arias, who was in this group.

On the way to the boarding area, they were accosted by a gang of ten people in civilian clothes.

“We did not know if they were shock forces or people linked to Luis Fernando Camacho. They began to insult us, to threaten us, to ask us what we were doing in Bolivia. They called us ‘communist gauchos’ and ‘homosexuals.’ They made reference to the cartoneros, it was clear they wanted to let us know that they knew who we were and provoke us to react. The place was deserted: they had taken over the area,” said Carlés.

At one point, they started pushing and hitting them, the ATE Secretary General, Daniel Catalano, was kicked.

“From the apparel they wore, we assume they were civilian police forces. Meanwhile, the uniformed police were there witnessing all the harassment and doing nothing,” Catalano said.

After this reception from the de facto government there was another more worrisome event:

“Walk carefully, we are watching you,” the government minister told them through statements to the press, calling them “those foreigners who are coming to try to burn the country.” “The first false step that they take to try to make terrorism or sedition is going to be met with the police,” he threatened. After these statements, some of the members of the delegation visited the Argentine embassy in Bolivia to ask for protection; they were granted some cars to travel in. “We are completely guarded all the time,” Carlés said.

Despite these inconveniences, the delegation continued with the agenda and spent the entire day in El Alto collecting testimonies from relatives of victims who suffered in their own flesh the violence exercised by the security forces. “The stories are frightening,” Arias told Pagina/12 . There are reports of disappearances, arbitrary detentions - among which are the case of three young people with Downs syndrome -, torture of children, murders as a result of repressive actions by police forces, injuries by lead bullets, fires, among other things.

Much of the survey was carried out in the San Francisco de Asís Church, where vigils for the deaths caused by the repression in Senkata had been held. “The situation is very terrible, families report not being treated in hospitals. Many of the wounded are in homes because when they go to hospitals they are charged with terrorism and sedition,” said Marianela Navarro, delegate of the Organizations in Struggle Front. According to the commission, it is not only the security forces who are attacking the population, but there are numerous institutions that are also reproducing the racist hatred that goes through the de facto government violence. “Public hospitals do not want to treat the wounded and the public defenders do not want to defend the victims. There is a deep racial hatred that is directed especially against the most vulnerable sectors and women, ” said Arias.

The commission also identified that there is a deep cruelty against “women with polleras” (traditional indigenous skirt). There have been numerous cases of rapes and sexual assaults against indigenous women and girls, attacked while alive and after their death. At the same time, there have been complaints that claim to have seen mutilated and dismembered bodies.

“People are very much in need of being heard, that the world know the truth of what is happening, because here there is a huge silencing,” said Arias, referring to the silence of the Bolivian media, which played an important role in the legitimization of the de facto government. “They ask us for help, they ask us for justice. What they have suffered has been virtually ignored by the international community. And they feel alone,” Carlés concluded.

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Featured image: The commission collected testimonies from victims and family members. Image: Pablo Añelli

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