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**Bolivia**

# **“It’s a message from the peoples to the world: dignity conquers fascism”**

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**On Sunday 18 October 2020 presidential elections were finally held in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. With 52.4 per cent of the votes (against Carlos Mesa’s 31.5 per cent), the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo), led by Luis Arce and David Choquehuanca, was the clear winner. The overwhelming victory of the MAS has already been recognized at home and abroad, and even by the architects of the coup d’état of November 2019.**

The joy was not only Bolivian: the result of the election, a reflection of the resistance of the people in the streets for eleven months, has been celebrated by the peoples of the world and particularly by those of Latin America, for whom it represents a breath of fresh air in the midst of an otherwise adverse scenario.

On behalf of *Jacobin América Latina*, Karina Nohales spoke to Adriana Guzmán, an Aymara, an anti-patriarchal community feminist and one of the first voices to denounce the coup of 2019 for what it really was: a racist and oligarchic coup, without nuances or half measures.

**Hi Adriana, it’s a pleasure to speak with you again in circumstances so different from the previous time. I would like to ask you, to begin with, what is your assessment of the results of Sunday’s elections.**

It is a triumph of the people, of the *polleras*, of the *wiphalas*. A triumph of dignity against fascism, against racism. It represents a message from the peoples to the world. This is our triumph, the triumph of the peoples, because the coup that has occurred here has tried to punish us and in these eleven months of resistance, of reorganization, we have shown that we want to live well, we want to live with dignity, that there is no place here for fascism or racism.

**The OAS (Organisation of American States) congratulated Luis Arce on his success. The same organization that played a determining role in the previous elections, denying the result that gave Evo Morales victory. What changed, in your opinion, between then and now?**

I think the result has been so overwhelming that ... The truth is, we didn’t expect such a difference. It has been so forceful that it has made undeniable the fact that the Bolivian people have decided that the MAS should form the government. Undeniable also for [Luis] Almagro, for Jeanine Áñez herself, for [Arturo] Murillo (with all his threats and all his fascism), for Media Luna, which continues to exist in Bolivia. The result, with that percentage of difference, has prevented them from manipulating the elections, from trying to commit fraud.

And I believe that, also, it has largely avoided a repression and a reaction from the de facto government. Obviously, the OAS had nothing more to do than acknowledge the result. But, despite the electoral victory, we remember: we do not forget the role of the OAS, the role of Almagro, in 2019 denouncing a “fraud” that has never been proven, and because they are responsible for the massacres in Bolivia.

**How has the right reacted in the last few hours? Or how do you generally expect it to react to this result?**

Now between us there is a mixture of joy, happiness, dignity ... But also uncertainty, because we do not see clearly what move they will make. Although the big difference in the result does not leave them much chance to make many moves, fascism is fascism. The de facto government is going to have its tools. And one of the issues that causes us this uncertainty is that there are no official results from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) so far. That this count has been delayed, that such irresponsibility has existed, leads us to suppose that this was where the attempted

manipulation they were thinking of making fell. So we are still waiting, expectant.

Something important that Senator Eva Copa has achieved, however, is the Arraigo Law. Eva Copa, who has had to resist with the people eleven months of racism, fascism, humiliation in her own workspace, permanent attack. Despite all this, she has managed to approve the Arraigo Law, and we hope that this law will be fulfilled [[The Arraigo Law obliges the authorities at the three levels of the state to remain in the country after completing their term to render accounts).

It is a risk, these days, but we hope they do not escape the country. Minister Murillo has presented his resignation. There are also strange movements in the state bank: the directors have resigned ... What we imagine is that they are stealing money. That they are stealing what remains of the state's money to leave, to escape justice. But I think that repression, at least, is not within the possibilities.

**What are the social movements going to do? What challenges lie ahead? And, especially, what is the relationship of the social movements with Luis Arce?**

The coup found us social organizations quite weakened, internally fragmented. But, at the same time, the coup allowed re-articulation, self-criticism in organizations: mainly, the need to meet again, to have dialogue, to understand that there are certain things in which we must have meeting points. Mainly, between the towns, the *vivir bien*, the communities, the *ayllus* and the left. We have to have a meeting point. These elections have shown, again, that this point exists.

So what are we going to do moving forward? I think you have to be blunt. Just as we were forceful at the polls, we must be forceful in deepening the process of change, in defending a series of transformations whose horizon is *vivir bien*, and nothing else. *Vivir bien* means reviewing the entire extractivist policy, reviewing the entire economic structure, reviewing all the contracts that threaten communities, reviewing the logic and the relationship that a plurinational state has to have with business.

This plurinational state has been built by and for the peoples. And these elections have been won by the people. Luis Arce has to understand that, as Evo did in 2005, after the gas massacre, after all the insurrections and mobilizations. Evo went with a mandate, and was able to understand that his strength was in the people. And that his strength was going to deepen if he responded to that people and fulfilled his mandate. I think it is a situation very similar to that of 2005, even in the percentage that Luis Arce is reaching. That percentage is not owed to the armed forces, it is not owed to the middle classes: it is owed to the people, who with all their fear, despite the repression, their wounded and their dead, have gone and voted for the MAS.

What is the relationship with Luis Arce? Well, Arce was a minister of the economy who achieved some stability of the economy. But it was an economy that was also located within the neoliberal capitalist world. This communitarian economy has been designed within the plurinational state, so there is an important respectful relationship. I highly value the path he took in the elections. He was not, I think, a “natural” candidate. He has had to learn to build his discourse in the media, to lead the relationship with the organizations ... he has shown himself determined to articulate the different indigenous and leftist organizations ... I highly value the work he has done.

With Luis Arce, from the organizations, there is a trust based on the binomial. And the fact is that the presence of David Choquehuanca is, for us, a guarantee from the struggle of the peoples. He's a brother, he's an *amauti*, and he's also going to be part of the government. So, the relationship of the movements with Luis Arce cannot be analysed separately, individually: it must be inscribed in this binomial that they have built with brother David Choquehuanca.

**What is the orientation that this new MAS government is expected to take?**

It is a complex context. As organizations, we hope that it responds to those of us who have voted for it, who have guaranteed to the country the return of democracy, who have supported the fight against racism and fascism. We hope that it responds to the demands of the people, which are the demands for a constituent assembly, the plurinational state, decolonization, de-patriarchalization, deepening the construction of a non-capitalist economy, a truly anti-colonial and anti-racist education.

Those are the concrete tasks. But it will be difficult, because these landowning groups and oligarchs are going to do everything to create a context of destabilization. The paramilitaries do not disappear with the elections. It will be difficult. Difficult but possible, as long as unity is achieved between social organizations, the government, the structure of the executive, and the Congress, the Parliament, the Plurinational Assembly. In the Plurinational Assembly, according to the percentages of the election, two thirds correspond to the MAS, so deepening all the measures that were already being carried out, on that side, will be easier.

**With this parliamentary majority, is a government expected to resume the continuity of the process that Evo started? Is Arce proposing any programmatic measures in particular?**

This is a government of continuity of the process of change. The process of change not in terms of the 20/25 agenda, but the process of change in terms of *vivir bien*, of the materialization of the plurinational state, of the construction of another economy. There are specific things in his program that have been based on the 20/25 agenda. But he has also spoken of economic transformations, of bonds to emerge from crisis ... Because, let's not forget: we are returning to democracy after a pandemic, an unprecedented economic crisis, a devastation of the state, the enormous looting done by the de facto government in these eleven months. So Arce has raised these bonds to reactivate the economy.

They are good measures but, above all, economic reactivation is possible when there is no de facto government. It is possible if we have a comrade and some brothers in the government, and if we continue to deepen the process. We live on food, of course, but we also live on dignity. We also live with a decent education, with sufficient health. For me it is a government that deepens the process, if it is to be maintained as a government.

**And regarding the problem of impunity for the pro-coup sectors, is it expected that this new government will take measures with respect to them?**

When we went to vote, I think behind the ballots it said “justice”. It will not be possible to rebuild the plurinational state, to rebuild what has happened in these eleven months, if there is impunity. Impunity is something that can destabilize the government.

If the investigation processes against the de facto government and the masterminds of the coup, such as Luis Fernando Camacho, leave them unpunished, as happened with Carlos Mesa in 2003, is an attack not only against the people but against the government itself. Because they are the same. Carlos Mesa, who was responsible for the gas massacre, has never been prosecuted by the state, as he should have been. Impunity, then, is a criterion of stability for this government. Justice is a criterion of stability.

**Thank you very much, Adriana. Is there anything you would like to add?**

I would like to thank the social organizations of Abya Yala, the feminist organizations, the left organizations, the

popular media, the medical sisters, doctors, who have been supporting us these eleven months, who have been there during the coup, who have come to denounce the violations of human rights, with their communications, with their permanent denunciation, with the breaking of the media siege. This has been a fight won by all, this is a victory for all, it would not have been possible without all those organizations. We have not been alone as a people and that must be appreciated and recognized.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Jacobin](#).*

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