

# What is happening in Bolivia? This Tec expert explains



In the wake of the presidential elections of October 20, **Bolivia** was inundated with protests that led to the resignation of President **Evo Morales** on November 10.

## THE ELECTION

- Evo Morales was seeking **reelection** for his fourth term in office. Despite this eventuality appearing unlikely based on the results of the 2016 referendum, he still hoped that Bolivian justice would prevail.
- On election night, a **second vote** against rival **Carlos Mesa** seemed to be on the cards, but after a system crash, Evo proclaimed himself to be the **winner the next day**.



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## PROTESTS

- Suspicions of fraud triggered **protests in the streets** and clashes between pro-government sympathizers and the opposition.
- Days later, citizen organizations called for a countrywide general strike. Candidate **Luis Fernando Camacho** stood in opposition to Morales.
- When Morales was officially declared the winner, several **countries** and **international organizations called** for a second round of voting.

## THE RESIGNATION

- The protest spread throughout the country until **Morales called a new election** on November 10.
- Later, on that same day, **Morales handed in his resignation at the suggestion of the armed forces** and inner circle, thereby leaving a **power vacuum** in the country.
- **The Mexican government granted Evo Morales political asylum** on November 11. News was also released that 20 government officers and legislators have taken refuge in the Mexican embassy in Bolivia.



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## COUP D'ÉTAT?

**Iliana Rodríguez Santibáñez**, associate director of **Tec de Monterrey's** Regional Legal Department, gives her opinion about what is happening in this South American country.

*"When any government group seizes executive power without first exhausting all relevant constitutional processes, **we'll be talking about a coup d'état.**"*

She noted that **the situation in Bolivia is singularly atypical.**

*"Firstly, **the one resigning is the Bolivian leader (Evo Morales),** who did so in a constitutionally correct manner."*



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She emphasized that it could be called a coup d'état if coercion on the part of the army could be proven.

*“Coercion could be presumed if we consider the number of public officials who ran to the embassies seeking asylum, particularly the Mexican embassy.”*

*“The fire at the leader’s home, the resignation of the vice president, the leader of the senate, the chamber of deputies, and subsequent **mass resignations evidently point to coercion**”.*

She noted that this coercion came from the **armed and police forces**, who were the first to call for the leader’s resignation.

*“There’s also the posture of the organized civil society, as expressed by **Camacho, who was the first to speak out about the need to annul the** October 20 elections.”*



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She added that many assume there was a **coup d'état** because the army first brought up the subject of Morales's resignation, but she made it clear that it was **up to countries to judge for themselves**.

*"It's like what happened in 2009 (in Honduras) when Manuel Zelaya was taken to Costa Rica, where he stated that he had been the victim of a coup d'état. **The OAS never recognized that there had been a coup d'état.**"*

She does, however, say that although **the circumstances seem to point to a coup d'état, while the rule of law is preserved, it is very difficult to reach that conclusion.**

*This reasoning is even more applicable **if the leader handed in his resignation legally and constitutionally.***

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN BOLIVIA?**

**The academic said that opposition senator Jeanine Añez would hold executive power in Bolivia during the transition period.**

*"So, the constitution requires that **Jeanine Añez** should assume the presidency of Bolivia. She is the **second vice-president of the senate** and an opponent of Morales.*

*She would formally assume this responsibility as dictated by the **order of succession** with the task of calling new elections **within a time frame of three months.**"*



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## WHAT DOES THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE HOLD?

*“What we are going to see is the immediate promotion of (Luis Fernando) Camacho, who brought about Evo’s downfall. He is sure **to appear as one of the candidates.**”*

She was of the opinion that **Carlos Mesa**, who had been pushed into the background, has fewer possibilities than Camacho, and although his candidature is very probable, she expects **him to stand down in a new election.**

*“Because **he was president once before, in 2003.** It looks **unethical** to me because the public is set against reelection. **It would be neither healthy nor positive for Carlos Meza to stand for office in this election.**”*



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Our expert therefore **expects to see new candidates** emerge in these elections.

*“With three months to prepare for the elections, **it will be complicated, but it will be interesting to see the maturity of the Bolivian people**, their organizational capacity, and how their demands are met.”*

In conclusion, she said that it would be important to keep a close watch on the **breach caused by the police** in this situation.

*“These **overlooked police groups** were an important variable in the generation of what we are **seeing in Bolivia**,” she concluded.*

**PHOTOS: AFP**

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