

# Bolivia's former President Evo Morales survives assassination attempt

Andrea Lobo  
31 October 2024

Bolivia's former President Evo Morales accused the government of President Luis Arce of sending "elite agents of the Bolivian state" to kill him after attackers shot multiple times at his caravan of vehicles on Sunday morning. The incident marks a sharp intensification of the conflict between factions of the ruling class in the resource-rich, South American country.

Morales published a video on social media showing him switching from a vehicle whose tires had been blown up to another vehicle, which also came under fire during a high-speed chase. The windshields and body of the trucks were riddled with bullets and the driver was hit in the arm and another bullet grazed his scalp. Morales was not injured.

In a statement, the dominant wing of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party, which is controlled by Morales, charged that men dressed in black carried out the attack from two unmarked vehicles. They were then seen entering a military barracks at the site of the shooting and leaving in a helicopter. The statement concludes by blaming the Arce administration and calling it "fascist."

The attack against Morales took place after several failed attempts by the police to clear major roadblocks, mostly in the central Andean highlands city of Cochabamba, which the ex-president's supporters have maintained for over two weeks against attempts to arrest him.

President Arce had named a new military high command the night before the attack, ordering it to "ensure the restoration of public order" against the pro-Morales protests. Significantly, the military leadership had already been reshuffled in late June, leading to the ousted commander of the Army, Gen. Juan José Zúñiga, launching a failed coup attempt aligned with

the fascistic right to overthrow Arce.

Now, government officials are openly considering demands for a state of exception and a military deployment made by the far right, which has close ties to the US Embassy, including the fascist Santa Cruz Civic Committee, the Santa Cruz government, and the jailed leader of the US-backed coup that deposed Morales in 2019, Jeanine Áñez. Unable to suppress mass opposition, Áñez was compelled to call for elections in 2020, which were won by Luis Arce, at the time a close ally of Morales.

On Tuesday, police attacked a roadblock in Mairana, Santa Cruz, but the pro-Morales crowd led by indigenous groups ambushed the police with rocks and dynamite. The government claims that about two dozen police officials and two journalists were kidnapped and tortured for several hours and that it would announce new repressive measures in response.

The Arce administration has sought to pin the blame for the failed assassination attempt on Morales himself, so far unconvincingly.

Government Minister Eduardo del Castillo said during a press conference that the former president's caravan had previously sped through a checkpoint of drug enforcement police, shooting at the officials and running over one of them. Del Castillo then played a recording where Morales apparently acknowledged to an interviewer that he personally fired shots at a tire. However, Morales was clearly speaking in broken Spanish about the shots at his own vehicle, while the video does not show anyone in his caravan shooting back as they were being attacked.

The government has nonetheless filed charges against Morales for attempting to kill a police official, with Del Castillo warning: "No one and nothing will save him from this criminal process, no one who attacks a police

officer can remain unpunished.”

The pro-Morales leadership has responded by expanding the roadblocks, and Morales warned on Wednesday to news agency EFE that if he were captured there would be an uprising among indigenous movements and mutinies within the police and the military.

For months, his supporters have demanded the resignation of Arce, whom they blame for growing economic ills, and letting Morales run for re-election, which is banned by the Constitution.

The most recent wave of roadblocks was spurred by an arrest warrant issued against Morales after the Arce administration resurrected allegations first made by the Añez regime in 2019 that Morales had impregnated a 15-year-old girl in 2016, when he was still in power.

Morales, who has barricaded himself in his hometown of Villa Tunari, Cochabamba to avoid arrest, has indicated that a prosecutor in Tupiza, where the alleged victim lives, had dropped the case based on a lack of evidence, and that no one can be prosecuted twice on the same charges.

Arce’s allies in the judiciary then opened three other criminal cases against Morales, including one of “foreign intervention” for using a truck allegedly donated by the Venezuelan state oil company.

The pro-Morales wing in Congress launched its own sexual scandal against Arce, preparing a press conference where a woman named Yéssica Villarroel denounced the current president for having a secret relationship with her and forcing her to have an abortion.

As the political conflict in Bolivia moves from mudslinging to an assassination attempt and potentially civil war, Morales and Arce have relied on their control of sections of the capitalist state, the MAS party, peasant organizations and the union bureaucracy.

All factions, however, are doing everything possible to preempt a mass intervention of the working class in the political and economic crisis. A major hike in the cost of living this year, shortages of fuel and dollars and economic stagnation have led to limited strikes among teachers, truckers, and other workers, as well as pot-banging protests in cities.

Following its economic “miracle” in 2003-2014, when the economy boomed in tandem with the rising gas export prices, Bolivia has proven to be a weak link

in the breakdown of bourgeois rule internationally as a result of the US-led imperialist drive to recolonize and redivide the world, which includes securing control over lithium and other key natural resources in Bolivia and Latin America against China and Russia.

Facing economic stagnation as a result of the drying up of natural gas, lower gas and lithium prices, the growth of public debt and the depletion of foreign reserves, each faction of the Bolivian ruling class is vying for support from one or another imperialist or capitalist power. This process, which is taking place across Latin America, threatens to drag the country and the region into world war. At the same time, however, the entire ruling class is determined to secure capitalist rule and exploitation against the working class.

Carlos Romero, a leader of the pro-Morales camp and former minister, had insisted earlier this year that “Morales is doing everything possible to contain a social mobilization.” On Tuesday, he warned Arce: “Military intervention would lead to an escalation of deaths and the escalation of deaths will provoke an uprising of greater dimensions and a greater state crisis, so what is the best way forward? For the government to convene a major national dialogue.”

Nonetheless, from Añez to Arce and Morales, no faction of the Bolivian ruling class has any other response to the deepening crisis of Bolivian capitalism than resorting to police state rule. None of them has any legitimacy in the eyes of the millions of Bolivian workers due to their record of austerity measures, corruption and repression. Workers cannot stay on the sidelines. The only way forward lies in mobilizing politically for power as part of a world socialist revolution.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**