

Former Officials of the Áñez Administration Are Fleeing Bolivia for U.S. and Brazil

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Global Research, December 02, 2020

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

New Bolivian President Luis Arce is investigating several former officials who served his predecessor Jeanine Áñez. They are accused of corruption or being responsible for massacres. Dozens fled Bolivia for the U.S. and Brazil to avoid prosecution, while others have already been arrested. Those who fled Bolivia mainly went to the U.S., [according to National Police](#).

Although Áñez's tenure was short, just one year in fact, many in her administration are being investigated for corruption, as well as massacres and repressive acts committed at the beginning of her mandate after the coup against Evo Morales on November 10, 2019. As a result, 37 Evo supporters were killed in street protests, allegedly by the police and military. Their families still demand justice and for this reason the Plurinational Legislative Assembly is carrying out a trial against Áñez's cabinet for crimes against humanity. When her government signed [Decree 4078](#), they gave free rein for security forces to repress the population, and even kill, without being held accountable.

Currently, the biggest escapees are former Minister of Government Arturo Murillo and former Defense Minister Luis Fernando López. They were behind many of the violent acts committed against the people and did not anticipate being replaced by Arce of the Movement for Socialism (MAS), Evo's party, following the October 18 election. Murillo was in charge of liaising with police and López with the Armed Forces. They fled Bolivia on November 5, three days before the Áñez government ended, and are accused of having purchased chemical agents for police forces at a premium of \$2 million. They took flight FAB-046 to Puerto Quijarro on the border with Brazil, in which they crossed on foot, according to Bolivian police.

For this reason, three immigration officials were [detained](#). Marcel Rivas, former Director of Migration, is accused of having facilitated Murillo's and López's escape. Once arrested, Rivas had more charges filed against him because according to Eduardo del Castillo, Minister of Government, the former director illegally issued 495 migration alerts against politicians, journalists, businesspeople and other opponents of Áñez.

Former Vice Minister of Government Javier Issa is in the U.S., according to the National Police. He is accused of participating in the theft and burning of Evo's military service book. In February, Patricia Hermosa, Evo's attorney, was arrested when she was carrying several personal documents of the ex-president who wanted to register as a candidate for the senate. However, Murillo ordered for the former president's military record, that was taken from Hermosa, to be burned to disqualify Evo from running.

In recent days, lawyer Rolando Cruz denounced former Minister of Communication Roxana

Lizárraga for crimes of “sedition, conspiracy, terrorism, criminal organization and others.” As evidence, Cruz presented seven videos filmed before and after the coup. The lawyer commented that he had information that Lizárraga was already in the U.S.

As soon as he took office, Arce changed the leadership of the police and the Armed Forces that supported Áñez and appointed Colonel Jhonny Aguilera as the new commander of the Bolivian Police.

“We know that former officials are in the United States. We do not know their status and we do not know the activities they are developing,” the police chief said.

By the Áñez government criminalizing the MAS, attacking the popular national bloc, and restricting progressive forces in Bolivia, they thought they would restrict support for the socialist political party. They were wrong as the biggest issue for Bolivians is reorganizing the economy that was ruined by the Áñez government. For their mistaken belief that the people wanted neoliberalism and would tolerate corruption, the Áñez government are now scrambling to escape Bolivia for Brazil or the U.S. to avoid prosecution.

Áñez herself was arrested trying to escape her native Beni province on the fringes of the Amazon to enter Brazil.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attempts to model himself on the likes of U.S. President Donald Trump and steers his country into becoming an American bulwark in Latin America. Although Trump has rebuffed Bolsonaro’s attempts to become a close friend, the Brazilian president insists on turning his country towards ultraconservative with the backing of U.S.-linked Evangelical churches and to implement a hyper neoliberal economy – this naturally puts him at odds with progressive forces in the region.

Because of this world view, strengthening cooperation between pro-U.S. neoliberal governments in South America has been a major priority for Bolsonaro. However, this faced a major hurdle after the restoration of democracy in Bolivia as Áñez’s administration relied on the support of the U.S. and neighboring pro-U.S. states for legitimacy. There is little surprise they are now fleeing or attempting to flee Bolivia for the U.S. and Brazil to avoid charges of corruption and crimes against humanity.

Although the U.S. and Brazil are accepting former officials of the Áñez’s administration and suffered a geopolitical loss with the restoration of the MAS government, it is unlikely they will engage in further subversive actions to undermine and destabilize Bolivia, at least in the short term. With Joe Biden potentially ascending to the presidency on January 20, most states are biding their time to see how a new U.S. presidency will position its Latin America policy. Although Trump was heavily involved in the coup attempts in Venezuela and had a hand to play in the successful coup in Bolivia, there is no suggestion yet that a Biden administration will continue such policies.

There is also no suggestion that Biden will oppose regime change operations in South America, which is likely the reason why former Bolivian officials feel comfortable enough to flee to the U.S. So long as Bolsonaro continues to rule Brazil, the Bolivian political opposition will continue to have a neighboring safe haven, meaning that although there might not be U.S. blessing, neoliberal and conservative forces in South America can continue their

destabilization campaign across the continent with Brazilian backing.

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This article was originally published on [InfoBrics](#).

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Featured image: Jeanine Anez receiving the presidential sash from a representative of the Bolivian military (photo: EFE).

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