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Bolivia forced to repeal controversial immunity decree for armed forces

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La Paz, November 29 (RHC)-- The decree that gave criminal immunity to military and police forces in Bolivia was repealed on Thursday, after the de facto government stated that the country achieved what it called "the desired peace."

The self-proclaimed president of Bolivia, Jeanine Añez announced the repeal of the decree, much questioned by international human rights organizations and throughout the country itself, where violence since the failed elections of Oct. 20 leaves 34 dead, many for gunshots during military and police operations.

"We have achieved the desired pacification," Añez said at a brief press conference at the government palace in the city of La Paz.

De facto president argued that the supreme decree she issued on Nov. 14, two days after assuming power, was "a constitutional appeal" taken in the face of "violent actions never seen before" in the Bolivian "history."

Añez expressly referred to what she called "days of terror" in the city of El Alto, La Paz, where on Nov. 19 at least 10 civilians were shot dead after a military and police operation, when groups protested against what they called a coup by the now de facto government of Añez.

Likewise, the de facto government has denied that the armed forces fired, while entities such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which sent a delegation to Bolivia,

denounced excessive use of force in the case of El Alto and other operations in the nationwide. Ten other civilians were shot dead in the Sacaba region in Cochabamba on November 15th in a law enforcement intervention.

Amnesty International, the Ombudsman of Bolivia, which filed an appeal for unconstitutionality, and other international and country entities strongly criticized Supreme Decree 4078, which exempted military and police from criminal responsibility if they acted with "proportionality" and "in self defense."

According to the Bolivia Ombudsman, 34 people have died and 832 have been injured as a result of violence since the elections of 20 October, which have now been annulled.

The violence began the day after the elections, when Evo Morales was declared the winner amid accusations of fraud from the opposition led by Carlos Mesa of the right-wing party Comunidad Ciudadana (CC) and urban agitation by civic committees headed by Luis Fernando Camacho.

Morales announced on Nov. 10 his resignation, forced by the Armed Forces, after a preliminary report from the Organization of American States that warned of "serious irregularities" in the elections, something that until now has not been presented in its final version.

The next day Morales left for Mexico, where he was given asylum, and since then the army has been carrying out joint operations with the police, who asked for their support when they were overwhelmed by massive protests in the midst of a power vacuum.

Añez declared herself president on November 12th and Decree 4078 was issued on the 14th.

Morales's resignation has been described as a "coup d'etat" by several Latin American governments and politicians, as well as several leaders and social movements in the world.  
Edited by Ed Newman

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