P9_TA(2019)0077

Situation in Bolivia

European Parliament resolution of 28 November 2019 on the situation in Bolivia (2019/2896(RSP))

(2021/C 232/05)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the statements of the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on the electoral process in Bolivia of 22 October 2019 and on the situation in Bolivia of 15 November 2019,

— having regard to the statement of the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Bolivia of 21 October 2019,

— having regard to the statement of the Group of Auditors on the Electoral Process in Bolivia of 10 November 2019,

— having regard to the statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet of 16 November 2019,

— having regard to the constitutional referendum held in Bolivia on 21 February 2016,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Bolivia,

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

— having regard to the latest press statements issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on Bolivia, in particular those of 23 October, 12 November and 19 November 2019,

— having regard to the Bolivian Constitution,

— having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on 20 October 2019, presidential and legislative elections took place in Bolivia in a highly polarised environment, given that President Evo Morales is a controversial figure and that controversy surrounded the acceptance of his candidacy;

B. whereas, after failing to win a referendum to amend the Bolivian Constitution in 2016, Evo Morales ran for a fourth term in office with the approval of the Constitutional Court, a decision that showed a clear lack of independence of the judiciary in Bolivia;

C. whereas after more than 80 % of the votes had been counted by the fast and secure system for the transmission of preliminary results (TREP), the Supreme Electoral Court stopped disclosing the preliminary results; whereas at this point the figures clearly indicated that there should be a second round of voting; whereas 24 hours later the Supreme Electoral Court 'presented data with an inexplicable change in trend that drastically modified the fate of the election and generated a loss of confidence in the electoral process', as stated by the OAS; whereas the Constitutional Tribunal ruled out the possibility of a second round of voting on the basis that the required percentage difference of 10 % between the top two candidates had been reached;

D. whereas the actions of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal sparked disagreement and suspicion of fraud not only among supporters of the opposition candidates, but also from national and international observers and the majority of the international community;

E. whereas President Morales publicly proclaimed himself the winner of the election, even before all official results had been transmitted and publicly announced;

Thursday 28 November 2019

F. whereas statements by the OAS, the EU and the international community expressed grave concerns about the unjustified interruption of vote counting, indicating a possible biased approach by the Electoral Commission observers; whereas the recommendation of domestic and international interlocutors was to organise the second round of the election as a way out of the political crisis;

G. whereas the unexpected interruption of vote counting and the proclamation of victory by President Morales resulted in massive protests and mobilisation by opposition supporters, as well as by supporters of President Morales himself; whereas these demonstrations have been a cause of great concern to the whole international community and have so far resulted in at least 32 people being killed, with hundreds more injured and over 600 arrested; whereas the country was suffering from food and fuel shortages that are having serious consequences on the civilian population due to street blockades by pro-Morales supporters; whereas there is concern over violence, allegations of unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by the security forces and the fracturing of society;

H. whereas the body in charge of administrating the election lacked any credibility, with one of its members resigning during the counting; whereas the opposition did not recognise the result of the election conducted under such circumstances, and denounced the alleged electoral fraud;

I. whereas the EU did not deploy a fully-fledged election observation mission but was only represented by a small technical team consisting of three lower-ranked officials;

J. whereas with the aim of re-establishing trust, both the government and the electoral authorities accepted a technical binding audit by a professional team of the OAS; whereas this audit had the UN Secretary-General's support;

K. whereas on 10 November 2019 the OAS audit revealed major irregularities and manipulation during the poll, called for the annulment of the election result and recommended a new electoral process that should include new electoral authorities in order to ensure the conduct of credible elections;

L. whereas after the presentation of the OAS audit report on 10 November 2019 calling for the electoral process to be annulled and re-run, many high-ranked state officials resigned, including the president, the vice-president, the Senate president and electoral body representatives; whereas Evo Morales and some other members of his government had to resign, leave the country and abandon their functions; whereas senior members of the armed forces suggested that former President Evo Morales should resign; whereas the armed forces and the police should refrain from influencing political processes and should be subject to civilian control;

M. whereas Jeanine Áñez signed a controversial decree protecting the armed forces from prosecution as a result of actions they take in the name of restoring public order;

N. whereas several resignations led Second Vice-President Jeanine Áñez to assume the interim presidency in order to quickly call for new presidential elections, as this is the only democratic and constitutional way to resolve the current crisis;

O. whereas both the lower and upper houses of the Bolivian Parliament unanimously approved legislation on 23 November 2019 that paves the way for a new presidential election, which was subsequently signed by interim President Áñez; whereas the approved legislation prohibits those who have served two consecutive terms as president from standing for re-election, hence making Evo Morales ineligible;

1. Welcomes the approval by both houses of legislation to prepare the next presidential elections but believes that a return to stability in Bolivia requires a new election as soon as possible, and therefore supports the objective of appointing a new independent Electoral Court to guarantee transparent elections; calls on the interim authorities to take responsibility for the credibility of the procedure by organising properly conducted and inclusive elections where all political actors have the opportunity to compete in accordance with Bolivian law and the constitutional order;

2. Denounces the lack of transparency and credibility of the Bolivian authorities and their attempt to commit fraud, thereby undermining the right of Bolivian citizens to freely and democratically elect their President; considers that the attempt at electoral fraud constitutes a grave crime; recalls that under Bolivian legislation, the election must be declared null and void and individuals and organisations involved in such illegal processes must be automatically excluded from electoral bodies;

3. Expresses its firm rejection of the violence and destruction that followed the election of 20 October 2019, conveys its condolences to all family members of the victims and calls for those responsible to be brought to justice;

4. Expresses its full support for and recognition of the work of the OAS electoral observers operating under the extremely difficult conditions in Bolivia;

5. Welcomes the decision to withdraw the military from protest areas and repeal a law giving them broad discretion in the use of force; calls on the security forces to exercise proportionality and restraint in maintaining security and public order; calls for prompt, impartial, transparent and throughout investigations into the violence and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

6. Calls on the new interim authorities to take the necessary steps to change the situation, restore trust and confidence, and, as their main purpose, to organise the electoral process; calls for a dialogue to be established with the aim of immediately organising a new democratic, inclusive, transparent and fair election, with a newly composed electoral body, as a way out of the current crisis, while avoiding political retaliation; calls on the caretaker government not to take any disruptive measures that could worsen the situation;

7. Welcomes the mediation role played by the EU and the Catholic Church in contributing to an agreement between parties on conducting free, inclusive and transparent elections within the established time frame and in accordance with the Bolivian Constitution;

8. Reiterates the fact that respect for the independence of the judiciary, political pluralism, and freedom of assembly and expression for all Bolivians, including the peasant indigenous nations and peoples, are fundamental rights and essential pillars of democracy and the rule of law;

9. Demands that the new electoral process take place in the presence of credible and transparent international observers who are free to operate and share their independent observations;

10. Expresses its readiness to assist in such an electoral process and calls on the VP/HR to deploy a fully-fledged EU election observation mission;

11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Government of Bolivia, the Andean Parliament and the EUROLAT Assembly.