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La Paz: A celebration of social movements, Indigenous, miners and MAS militants

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"We hope to be remembered as the government in which the Bolivian people rose up to recover democracy, dignity, peace, growth, and social justice," said Luis Arce in his presidential speech, from the premises of the Legislative Assembly. At his side were the Vice President, David Choquehuanca, the Presidents of the Senate and the House of Representatives, Andrónico Rodríguez and Freddy Mamani respectively.

At that time, the center of La Paz was a celebration in which social, indigenous, mining, union, and militant movements of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), from different parts of the country, surrounded the Plaza Murillo. The celebration had begun the night before, at the vigil of the organizations held near where the event was to take place.

The early presence of the movements was due to the permanence of threats from a sector of the right until the last hours. On Saturday night, a new concentration and march took place in La Paz under the slogan of a request for an audit and suspension of the takeover. Although at that time it was clear that the transfer of command would take place and that the social forces of the right were mostly exhausted, the alerts to possible unforeseen events were maintained until the last moment.

The political scene was one of the central points of the new president's speech. He referred to what had happened since the coup d'état as "an internal and systematic war against the people, especially against the most humble ... death, fear and discrimination were sown, racism intensified (...) the persecution of leaders of the MAS and of the social movements, there were deaths, injuries, imprisonment, persecution, isolation and exile.

There was a minute's silence for those who had been killed and a constant acknowledgement of the massacres in Sacaba and Senkata, which took place a few days after the coup in November last year. The new president referred to them as "symbols of dignity and resistance", he paid homage to "the fallen, to the heroes of the people who have recovered democracy".

Several international representations were present at the inauguration, such as the government of Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Spain, Venezuela, Uruguay, Iran, Chile, the Arab Emirates, as well as delegations of political parties from different countries, as well as Bolivian parliamentarians and movements.

Jeanine Añez, who had announced her departure a few days before to the city of Trinidad, in the department of Beni, was not present, as expected, refuting a possible escape from the country. The one who was present on behalf of the opposition was the leader Carlos Mesa, second place in the October elections, who recognized Arce's victory from the beginning. However, both he and his

parliamentary group left the premises before the speeches.

"We must overcome the division, hatred, racism and discrimination among compatriots, no more persecution of freedom of expression, and no more judicialization of politics, no more abuse of power ... no more impunity, justice brothers, but justice has to be truly independent," stated Choquehuanca, in a message of dialogue and unity present in both speeches.

The new government takes office in a context of instability. While those who formed the de facto government are in retreat and may flee the country to avoid being held accountable, and Carlos Mesa seeks to become the main opposition, there is a sector, led in part by Luis Fernando Camacho, third in the elections, who embodies the most radical wing of the right. This sector does not recognize the validity of the results or the inauguration. What will they do from now on? This is one of the main questions.

"These minority sectors raise the flag of democracy only when it is convenient for them, and when they do not resort to destabilization, violence, or coups d'état to take power," said Arce, who referred to the use that these sectors made of "paramilitary groups," which carried out actions until Friday, in Cochabamba or Santa Cruz.

The government faces a triple crisis, mentioned by Arce: democratic, a product of the coup and the de facto government; health, due to the pandemic, and economic. Añez's administration left numbers in the red, with a fall of 11.1% of the GDP, a fiscal deficit of 12.1%, a deficit of 8.7% of the Federal Treasury, and a debt of 4.2 billion dollars contracted in the last eleven months. "A day goes by without taking action, a day that complicates the situation," the president affirmed.

The social expectation with the new government is great. Both by those who mobilized to Plaza Murillo, like the 36 indigenous nationalities, the organization of

the Ponchos Rojos that were part of the presidential security, or the Central Obrera Boliviana, as well as by broad layers of the population that in less than a year faced the impacts of a recession, pandemic, and a de facto government that threatened, persecuted, and never fulfilled any of its promises.

The new president referred to the international issue and affirmed, as he had already said, that he will focus efforts on building the “political unity of the diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean” through Celac, and Unasur in the South American region, “as a space for integration and a mechanism for policy coordination, where we can all meet regardless of the political orientations of governments. The new Bolivian government emerges as a possible element for bringing together and working with different parts of progressive Latin America.

The inauguration begins a new moment in the process of Bolivian change: “we are committed to rectifying what was wrong and deepening what was right,” said Arce. Within this new stage, challenges of the internal order appear, such as requests from movements for a change of leadership, as well as threats from destabilizing forces that have already indicated that they will not return – or so it seems – to a democratic path.

Sunday was a celebration in La Paz, with Evo Morales now in the country, Bolivia leaves behind one of the darkest pages of its recent history with a democratic victory and a new popular government.

Source: [Internationalist 360°](#)



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