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FEATURED Q&A

Will Bolivia Be Able to Hold Free & Fair Elections Soon?



Interim Bolivian President Jeanine Áñez has said she wants a new presidential election as soon as possible. // File Photo: Bolivian Government.

Q **Jeanine Áñez, the deputy head of Bolivia's Senate, on Nov. 12 declared herself the country's interim president, following President Evo Morales' resignation and departure to Mexico, which granted him asylum. Áñez has said she will work to pacify the country and seek a new presidential election. What must she and other Bolivian leaders do to end the ongoing violent protests in Bolivia and restore a credible, functioning government? Will the country be able to hold free and fair elections anytime soon? What influence will Morales, campaign rival Carlos Mesa and protest leader Fernando Camacho have in what happens next?**

A **Javier Corrales, Dwight W. Morrow 1985 professor and chair of political science at Amherst College:** "The government had promised reconciliation and elections, which I think is exactly what the country needs. However, the Áñez administration seems to be renegeing on that pledge, becoming more inclined instead to purge. The government seems to have come in with the idea that what Bolivia needs is to rid itself of MAS' influence. MAS committed many abuses, and some things about the status quo need to be corrected, but MAS is a legitimate political actor. To attempt to erase its influence is too polarizing, especially prior to an electoral contest. This type of purging will only make the Masistas angrier and turn many independents less supportive of the new direction that the country has taken. My fear is that the Áñez administration may end up repeating some of the very grave mistakes Morales made at the beginning of his administration: to want to purge the country of any influence other than his party's. Purges and

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TODAY'S NEWS

ECONOMIC

Brazil to Ask Rich Nations for Help in Fighting Deforestation

Brazil's government plans to ask developed nations for \$100 billion a year to help fight deforestation in the Amazon, according to Environment Minister Ricardo Salles.

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BUSINESS

Former Braskem CEO Charged With Money Laundering

José Carlos Grubisich, a former CEO of Brazilian petrochemical firm Braskem, was arrested at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York.

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POLITICAL

Colombia Braces for Today's Expected Massive Protests

The government of President Iván Duque sealed the country's land and river borders, raided homes to seize materials that could be used for making explosives and placed soldiers on high alert.

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Duque // File Photo: Colombian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Colombia Braces for Protests, Borders Sealed Until Friday

Colombia's government is bracing for massive protests today as unions, university students, human-rights activists, indigenous leaders, environmentalists and others join a national strike, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. On Wednesday, the government sealed its land and river borders and plans to keep them closed until Friday to prevent foreigners from joining the demonstrations in Bogotá, Medellín and other cities. The military has removed soldiers from leave and placed them on high alert, and police officers have been searching homes for explosives, the newspaper reported. Additionally, President Iván Duque's government has established a task force consisting of 107 prosecutors in order to process people who are arrested. The government has also deported 24 Venezuelans accused of entering Colombia in order to stir up unrest, the Associated Press reported. Discontent in Colombia has come amid other protests in the region, including in Chile and Ecuador. "We are going through a democratic period around the world in which people's feelings are inflamed," Duque said in a recent speech, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. "Some protesters have laudable intentions, but others are fishing in troubled waters to foment social conflict." On Tuesday during searches of more than two dozen homes in Bogotá, police seized materials that they said could be used to make homemade bombs. Interior Minister Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez justified the searches. "When there is incitement and disorder, authorities have a constitutional obligation to react," she said. In the capital, employees of stores and banks boarded up windows and automated-teller machines, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. Some schools said they planned to cancel classes today. Demonstrators in Colombia have voiced several grievances, including the country's 10.2 percent unemployment rate as well as worries that the government may lower pension benefits

and the minimum wage for first-time workers. The country's labor minister, Alicia Arango, has denied that such measures are under consideration. Critics of Duque's government also say officials have failed to protect human-rights activists and community leaders, almost 300 of whom have been killed since 2016, according to the office of the attorney general. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in Wednesday's Advisor.]

ECONOMIC NEWS

Brazil to Ask Rich Nations to Help Fight Deforestation

Brazil will ask developed countries to help finance efforts to protect the Amazon rain forest and promote sustainable economic activities at a U.N. climate conference in December, Environment Minister Ricardo Salles said on Wednesday, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. Salles said his country would ask rich nations at the U.N. COP25 conference in Madrid to provide \$100 billion a year to help Brazil and other developing countries preserve their natural resources, as pledged under the 2016 Paris Agreement. "It's necessary that funds compatible with the challenge of preserving the Amazon start to flow towards developing countries," Salles told reporters. "The people who take care of the forest must be compensated," he added. His statement comes just days after new government data was made public, showing that the rate of deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rain forest has sharply accelerated during the past year and is at its highest level in a decade. From August of last year through July of this year, Brazil's portion of the rain forest has lost an area equal to nearly 12 times the size of New York City, *The New York Times* reported. Almost all of the new deforestation occurred during the presidency of far-right Jair Bolsonaro, who took office in January and whose government is seen as having more lax enforcement of environmental laws and as having reduced efforts to fight illegal logging, mining and ranching. Salles said the adminis-

NEWS BRIEFS

Interim Bolivian President Asks Lawmakers for New Election, No Date Set

Bolivian interim President Jeanine Áñez has asked Congress to approve a call for a new election, as violence continues in the Andean country following the resignation of longtime President Evo Morales, BBC News reported today. However, Áñez did not set a date for the new vote. Since the controversial Oct. 20 presidential election, which Morales barely won and which international observers have said was marred by irregularities, 32 people have been killed in clashes between supporters of the former president and the country's security forces.

Venezuela to Use 30 Mn Barrels of Oil to Back Cryptocurrency: Maduro

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro said Wednesday that nearly 30 million barrels of oil that are sitting in storage tanks will be used to back the country's state-run cryptocurrency, the petro, Reuters reported. "I will deliver these 30 million barrels as a liquid, physical, material backing for the petro," Maduro said in a televised address. It's the government's latest effort to promote the use of the petro, which remains sanctioned by the United States, as inflation continues to rise in the South American country.

Chile's SQM Reports Plunge in Profits for Q3

Amid low prices for lithium, Chile-based SQM said late Wednesday that its profits for the third quarter fell 27.5 percent to \$60.5 million, as compared to \$83.5 million for the same quarter last year, Reuters reported. SQM is the world's second-largest producer of lithium, which is used in batteries for electric vehicles. SQM's CEO, Ricardo Ramos, said demand from China was lower than expected.

tration would work to cut deforestation next year and reach zero in the future, but he did not provide a plan.

BUSINESS NEWS

Former Braskem CEO Charged With Money Laundering

A former chief executive of Brazilian petrochemical firm Braskem was arrested in the United States on Wednesday in connection with an alleged scheme to divert \$250 million in company money into a secret fund used to pay bribes to government officials, the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of New York said in a statement. José Carlos Grubisich, who led the company from 2002 through 2008, was arrested at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. A three-count indictment made public on Wednesday in a federal court in Brooklyn, N.Y., charges Grubisich with money-laundering conspiracy and conspiracy to violate antibribery and books-and-records provisions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, The Wall Street Journal reported. He has pleaded not guilty. U.S. prosecutors allege that Grubisich and co-conspirators, who were not named, created a slush fund with payments made from Braskem's bank accounts in New York, Florida and Brazil. The indictment is the latest round of corruption allegations in Brazil, which has been rocked by graft scandals in politics and business since the massive Car Wash investigation began in 2014, The Wall Street Journal reported. Grubisich's lawyer did not immediately respond to the newspaper's request for comment.

Teck Resources Hires Barclays to Sell Stake in Peru Copper Mine

Canada-based Teck Resources has hired Barclays to help it sell its entire 80 percent stake

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sectarianism were polarizing and destabilizing back in 2008-09, and they can be just as polarizing and destabilizing now, even if they stem from an administration with a different ideology."

A Lily Peñaranda, chief development officer at the Sustainable Development Solutions Network in Bolivia: "President Áñez and her interim government are now looking at forces that go beyond social and political interests. Instead, criminal forces are demanding that Morales return. Bolivia is undergoing what I would call a 'Colombianization' of the territory of El Chapare, where Morales has been the coca producers' union leader since before his first presidential term, a position he keeps while in political asylum in Mexico. These criminal forces have been convulsing the country in order to provide Morales' political wing with leverage to negotiate conditions for the upcoming elections. While it is imperative to call new elections as soon as possible, it is probable that negotiations will take a few more days. The main questions remain: Will Morales be an option on the next ballot? Will Morales' party continue under a hard 21st century socialism line? Or will Morales' party lose its legal status due to electoral fraud? Campaign rival Carlos Mesa already stated he would run for president in the next election, a decision that allows for a fragmentation of opposition

in its Zafranal copper mine in Peru, Reuters reported Wednesday, citing two sources in the banking industry. Teck has recently sought to focus on its massive expansion in Chile and has been exiting some advanced projects. The miner said last year that it would proceed with phase two of its \$4.7 billion Quebrada Blanca copper project in Chile. The company's chief executive officer, Don Lindsay, has said Teck may either seek a partner for the Zafranal mine or sell it altogether. The asset, which also produces gold, could sell for as much as \$500 million, one of the sources told Reuters. However,

forces. Carlos Mesa's Comunidad Ciudadana accounts for the second political force after Oct. 20, however, his constituency was mainly punishing Morales. Mesa would lose

“ President Áñez and her interim government are now looking at forces that go beyond social and political interests.”

– Lily Peñaranda

political momentum should Morales be out of the picture. Civic leaders such as Fernando Camacho and Marco Pumari are the black swans that emerged during the post-election scenario. If no agreement to cooperate with Mesa is reached, the latter could represent the new minority."

A Miguel Centellas, Croft instructional assistant professor of sociology and international studies at the University of Mississippi: "Bolivia is currently in a delicate situation. Evo Morales resigned after weeks-long public protests over credible accusations of electoral fraud, following his insistence on running for a fourth consecutive term, disregarding a referendum on this issue in 2016. In the wake of his resigna-

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the mine would need \$1 billion in investment before it can start producing metals. Vancouver-headquartered Teck and its advisors are gauging interest from other mining companies that currently operate in Peru, the wire service reported. A representative from Barclays was not immediately available for comment to Reuters, and a Teck representative declined to comment, saying it is the company's policy not to comment on speculation. Japan-based Mitsubishi Materials owns the remaining 20 percent of Zafranal, and its representatives were not available for immediate comment.

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tion, most MAS officials either resigned or refused to participate in politics, leaving Áñez next in the line of succession. The crucial task is to negotiate a 'pact' with all sectors of Bolivian society—including MAS. This means sending clear signals that the new government will build upon (not try to dismantle) the plurinational state. Áñez seems to be moving in this direction, despite some missteps. Her first cabinet included no indigenous representatives and reflected the Santa Cruz business sector. Since then, she named Martha Yujra (as culture minister) and Milton Navarro Mamani (as sports minister). She also made a YouTube video underlying the need to respect the indigenous peoples' flag, the wiphala. Sustained dialogue, not police enforcement, is the best tool for peace. Elections could take place soon. The evidence of fraud points to top-level electoral body administrators, not rank-and-file professionalized workers. What is important is that MAS be allowed to participate in that election (without Evo Morales). A large portion of the Bolivian public still identifies with MAS and will not view as legitimate an election without their participation. Otherwise, we may see the same kind of post-election protests in two months. MAS can certainly choose not to participate in the political process, but that option must remain available to them."

A **Gonzalo Mendieta, partner at Mendieta Romero & Asociados law firm in Bolivia:** "President Áñez must make finer efforts to dispel misgivings against her government from the Aymara and other indigenous communities. Áñez appointed a couple ministers of Aymara origin, but her government may still be perceived as too eastern Bolivian and middle class for indigenous sensibilities. That plays well into the hands of former President Morales' message. The government needs a net of operators to enter into accords with those who supported Evo on somewhat pragmatic terms. This

strategy would leave the coca growers region of Chapare as the hot spot, but could deactivate further turmoil. Elections cannot feasibly take place before this constitutional term ends in January, as questions remain about much more time this process demands and how to craft it. Áñez may resort to presidential decrees should efforts aimed

“**President Áñez must make finer efforts to dispel misgivings against her government from the Aymara and other indigenous communities.”**

— Gonzalo Mendieta

at a legislative agreement with Evo's party, sponsored by the Catholic Church and the international community, fail. In any case, no one foresees an exit to the crisis other than through free and credible elections. Carlos Mesa and Fernando Camacho are likely relevant candidates, the former with a centrist agenda and the latter leaned to the right, both displaying contrasting regional overtones (Mesa being a typical criollo from the west, Camacho a typical criollo from the east). Camacho would need additional time to set up a party to run and is influential in the government, whereas Mesa is not. Hence the question of when elections will be held is crucial for Bolivian political configuration."

Editor's note: The commentaries above were submitted to the Advisor before former Bolivian President Evo Morales told The Wall Street Journal in an interview that he would be willing to sit out the next presidential election if he is allowed to finish his term.

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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