



[Bolivia: A Victory or a Defeat for Democracy?](#)

Bolivian President Evo Morales stepped down after protests paralysed the country following a tightly contested election and allegations of vote rigging. Prior to this, Morales had controversially amended the constitution to allow himself to stand for a fourth term as president. While Morales' three previous terms had corresponded with a three-fold increase in GDP, a doubling of the minimum wage and increased representation of women and indigenous groups in the government, [a previous history of dictatorial rule had made the Bolivians wary of a term extension](#). There were also fears about the dominance of Morales' party and a rise in corruption in the government. Morales won the presidential election with a 10-point margin over his opponent, but did not win the majority. An unexplained 24-hour pause in reporting of results was followed by a boost of votes for Morales. This caused the Office of American States (OAS) and the European Union (EU) to call for a run-off election. A subsequent preliminary report by OAS found clear allegations of fraud. This sparked mass protests led by opposition parties across Bolivia.

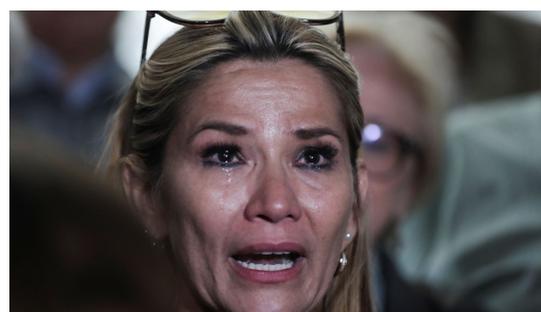


While Morales did finally agree to a re-election and also replaced the country's election board, this did not satisfy the protesters. After rising violence, with even police forces turning against the Morales government, the military intervened and asked Morales to resign. His own party

members resigned too, leaving Morales with no choice but to step down. Subsequent to his resignation, [Morales fled Bolivia and accepted political asylum in Mexico](#).

International observers are split over what happened in Bolivia. While some are calling it a victory for democracy, with an undemocratically elected president being forced to resign in response to protests by the people, others are pointing to the involvement of the military and calling it a coup.

It should also be noted that Morales, the first indigenous President of Bolivia, gained his support from the indigenous populations and working class of the country. His opponents, on the other hand, are supported by the middle and upper classes, which are mainly White. It should also not be ignored that militaries in Latin America have a [history of supporting conservative](#), White majority governments that do not have the best interests of the indigenous populations in mind (also see [Jair Bolsonaro's rule in neighbouring Brazil](#)).



For now, the military appears to have stood down, with the leader of the opposition Jeanine Anez temporarily ascending to the presidency. Whether this is merely an inflection point in Bolivia's democratic journey or represents a turn towards authoritarianism is yet to be seen.

