

# Bolivian government authorizes deployment of military against working class uprising

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On Wednesday, the 27th consecutive day of Bolivia's indefinite general strike, President Rodrigo Paz signed into law the abrogation of every legal restriction on the military's deployment against the civilian population.

The action repealed Law 1341—known as the “state of exception law,” which was in force since 2020, in the aftermath of the massacres committed by the coup regime of Jeanine Áñez. It legally constrained the president's ability to deploy the armed forces against domestic unrest. With its abrogation, Paz can now send the army into the streets to massacre the Bolivian people at the moment of his choosing.

The new law was approved with more than two-thirds of the vote in both chambers. The process was completed in less than 48 hours under an emergency procedure bypassing normal deliberation. The Chamber of Deputies held its Tuesday session virtually, with physical access to La Paz having been cut off by the very blockades the law was designed to crush.

The arguments from the floor were ideologically naked. Deputy Carlos Alarcón of the ruling Unidad alliance described Law 1341 as “the principal obstacle the government and the president have to decree the state of exception”—a candid admission that the entire exercise was about removing a legal impediment to repression, not restoring any constitutional principle. Deputy Manolo Rojas of the PDC (Christian Democrats) was more explicit still: “Law 1341 was created to strip our president of his constitutional prerogatives. How do you want the people of La Paz to react to violent conduct? With little flowers, with white handkerchiefs? No.” He concluded: “There are two factions here—the Bolivian people and the terrorists.”

The mass movement that the criminal capitalist elite designates as “terrorist” is continuing to expand. As of the morning of May 28, the Bolivian Road Administration registered 66 active road blockade points across six departments, with police figures, which disaggregate each checkpoint individually, counting over 150 nationally.

Covering the expansion of road blockades by mobilized peasants in the Chuquisaca region, *Correo del Sur* reported

this Thursday: “Sucre [Bolivia's constitutional capital] continues to be isolated from all road connections with the country by a measure of pressure that responds to a single demand: the resignation of President Paz.” The newspaper wrote that “a peasant source said ... that the roadblocks will become even more widespread on Thursday,” with five new regional roadblocks being added to the six already in place.

The workers' strikes are also expanding in the cities. Transport workers in La Paz declared an indefinite strike on May 27, citing fuel shortages, damage caused by adulterated gasoline and unmet government commitments on compensation. In a statement that is revealing both of the prevailing mood among workers and of the role played by the union bureaucracy, Departmental Federation of Drivers' leader Chuquiago Marka stated: “The rank and file were asking to join the demand for the resignation of President Paz, but the leadership persuaded them not to include it.”

The Paz administration, fully backed by US imperialism and its regional allies, is already covering up its crimes as it prepares to multiply them.

Last Saturday, during a 3,000-strong police-military operation to force open the La Paz–Oruro highway, cynically called the “White Flags Humanitarian Corridor,” 24-year-old *comunario* Víctor Cruz Quispe was shot in the Calamarca municipality and died within minutes. The forensic autopsy is unambiguous: cause of death, penetrating cervical trauma by firearm projectile.

The government initially denied any deaths in the operation and attempted to discredit photographs circulating on social media by claiming that they were dated from 2024. The prosecution confirmed the killing and opened a homicide investigation. When the evidence became undeniable, the government acknowledged Quispe's death but insisted that riot police had been instructed not to use firearms or rubber bullets. “This has a specific cause,” the president's office stated, fraudulently insinuating that responsibility lay elsewhere. His body was laid in state on the highway itself. The Ombudsman Office has registered seven dead, 23 wounded and 321 arrested.

It is against this backdrop that Paz, on the same day he cleared the legal path for a military crackdown of the demonstrations, appealed for “dialogue.”

“Come talk to us. Come explain your reasons. Let people see us face to face,” he said while announcing the creation of an “Economic Social Council of the Nation.”

On Thursday, Paz issued a “last call” for the leaders of the Bolivian Workers Central (COB) and of the Túpac Katari Unified Departmental Federation of Indigenous and Rural Workers to participate in negotiations with the government. “I invite them one last time,” Paz declared. This is rotten political theater, designed to feign reasonableness while the weapons are being loaded. The leaders Paz is ordering to “come and talk face to face as humans” face arrest warrants on terrorism charges and cannot appear in public.

The union bureaucracy’s response to this blackmail reveals its own political limits. *El Deber* reported that the COB and Túpac Katari sent emissaries to request guarantees they would not be arrested upon appearing at the negotiating table. From clandestinity, Mario Argollo, executive secretary of the COB, denounced the abrogation of Law 1341 as a “betrayal by the fathers of the nation” who “are trying to pit us against our brothers in the police and military. We want to tell them that we are not the enemy. The enemy is the one making us fight.”

Paz is traveling to Santa Cruz to meet with the presidents of the “Civic Committees” of all nine departments in the country. These are fascist organizations that represent the agro-industrial and financial oligarchy, with a long tradition of paramilitary mobilization against the Bolivian working class and indigenous communities.

On May 21, Santa Cruz Civic Committee’s president Stello Cochamanidis gave the government a 48-hour ultimatum to clear the blockades, threatening that “thousands of citizens will go out and unblock the roads” and denouncing “criminal groups financed by drug trafficking and destabilizing NGOs.” This threat was theatrically suspended after the Church’s mediation. Now, as the legal groundwork for military repression is completed, Paz flies to meet them. The meaning of this summit is unambiguous: The government is coordinating with fascist forces to organize a murderous crackdown against the working class. This has an immediate precedent in the 2019 coup and the subsequent massacres, for which the same forces provided the civilian shock troops.

The abrogation of Law 1341 has a profound political significance. It was passed in 2020 by a Congress controlled by MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo), the bourgeois nationalist party that ruled Bolivia from 2006 to 2019, and again from 2020 to 2025. The law was as a direct response to the killings carried by the Áñez coup regime—a formal

constraint on the executive’s ability to deploy the armed forces against its own population, written in the blood of the dozens dead in El Alto and Senkata.

MAS’s return to power did not represent a break with the policies that had brought it down. Its reactionary policies, which thoroughly discredited it in the eyes of the working masses, opened the door directly to Paz and the forces in continuity with the 2019 coup. The fact that Law 1341 was swept aside in under 48 hours, the moment workers emerged in the political scene, exposes a strategic truth that the entire trajectory of MAS confirms: The bourgeois state cannot be made to serve the working class by painting it in progressive colors. What is required is its revolutionary overthrow by the working class.

Bolivia’s workers have sustained 28 days of strikes, blockades and resistance to repression with determination. But determination alone cannot resolve the fundamental political problem: The organizations leading the movement—the COB bureaucracy and the various MAS factions, including Morales’s—do not represent the independent interests of the working class. They represent sections of Bolivia’s bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie whose aim, whatever their current tactical disputes with Paz, is to contain the class struggle within the framework of capitalist governance and eventually negotiate a settlement. Workers cannot depend on these forces to lead a struggle that has already moved beyond what they are prepared to do.

The de facto state of exception makes the situation unambiguous. There is nothing to negotiate with this government. What is required is the independent political mobilization of the working class—through rank-and-file committees, accountable to workers in the mines, schools, hospitals and blockades, and united with the international working class movement confronting the same capitalist attacks and fascist repression on every continent. Workers in every country must make the defense of the Bolivian working class their own cause.



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