

# Bolivian workers' insurrection enters sixth week defying Paz-Trump counterrevolutionary conspiracy

Tomas Castanheira  
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Thirty-six days into Bolivia's indefinite general strike, the government of Rodrigo Paz has not broken the uprising. Road blockades—which peaked at more than 100 active points earlier this week before a partial reduction during the Corpus Christi holiday—continue to strangle access to La Paz and extend well beyond the capital.

Demonstrations are reported across the country, with Cochabamba having become the new epicenter of protests. In Santa Cruz, mobilized peasants occupied the Humberto Suárez Roca oil field on Tuesday and were brutally repressed. A 21-day blockade in San Julián has paralyzed one of the country's main agro-industrial corridors. The cocalero federations of the Chapare have announced a mass march converging on El Alto.

On June 2, the Departmental Federation of Neighborhood Associations of La Paz (Fejuve) organized a massive popular assembly in El Alto, the working-class city on the plateau above La Paz where major class battles of this century have been waged. The assembly declared a “permanent mobilized state of emergency” and ratified the single demand of Paz's resignation. After military clearing operations, protesters retook El Alto's industrial zone of Senkata and occupied the surrounding streets that drivers had been using as alternative routes.

One week ago, Paz signed the revocation of Law 1341, clearing the legal path for a military crackdown against the mass uprising. However, the immensely demoralized Bolivian bourgeois regime has not yet felt in a position to frontally clash with the working masses.

With the backing of US imperialism and every dirty and illegal method at its disposal, the Paz administration has spent the last days focused on bridging that gap.

On Wednesday, June 3, Paz announced the replacement of Defense Minister Marcelo Salinas by Ernesto Justiniano. The political pedigree of the man—whose first act in the new role was to lead a military-police clearing operation of a roadblock in Huajchilla on foot, personally—speaks for itself.

Known as the “anti-drug tsar,” Justiniano served as Vice-Minister of Social Defense and Controlled Substances under

the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who was overthrown by the mass social eruption of 2003 known as the “Gas Wars.” Having accused his opponents of seeking to build “the first narco-syndical state in South America,” Lozada presided over one of the most brutal massacres in Bolivia's history, that left at least 67 dead and more than 400 injured in El Alto.

This criminal political script is being reedited by Paz today, under national and regional conditions that make it even more dangerous.

At Justiniano's swearing-in ceremony, Paz announced the waging of “the battle of battles.” “This is a war, this is an invasion against Bolivia,” he said, fraudulently accusing narco-traffickers of financing the mobilizations. “It is no surprise,” he said, “that from narcotics-producing regions, carriers of economic resources have been captured, which in some cases have gone to feed mobilizations and actions against our democracy.” The goal of the mass protests, he cynically claimed, was to prevent “the consolidation of a new Bolivia without corruption and with narco-trafficking cornered.”

Paz's reliance upon the “narco-terrorism” narrative, being utilized by the fascist Trump administration to justify all its criminal imperialist interventions across Latin America, is unmistakable. This was confirmed straight from the horse's mouth in the following day.

On Thursday, Pete Hegseth posted on X in the name of the “Department of War and the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition (A3C)”: “The Department of War and the A3C reject all attempts to overthrow the legitimate government of President Rodrigo Paz in Bolivia. The United States is watching. Bolivia must not allow itself to fall prey to the old status quo of narco-terrorist dominance in the region.”

Secretary of State Marco Rubio called Paz on that same day to announce the intensification of “emergency assistance and logistical support to Bolivia.” He also reaffirmed, according to reports, “the unwavering commitment of the United States to support” the “Paz government and the reconstruction the country after 20 years of failed socialist policies.” Rubio's formulation makes explicit the class lines of the unfolding

battle between the Bolivian masses and the US-backed Paz administration.

What US imperialism is defending in its South American “backyard” is the reversal of all social gains won since the major struggles of the early 2000’s and, more precisely, since the beginning of the 20th century. The “new Bolivia,” as Paz framed it, should be a neo-colonial protectorate of US imperialism; its natural resources directly administered by foreign finance capital; its state spending strictly limited by an austerity regime dictated by the IMF, as Paz’s government has been enforcing since taking office.

The “narco-terrorism” framing is the ideological instrument for that program—its function is to amalgamate and legitimize military violence against any form of political and social opposition to the dictates of imperialism and the rotten national bourgeoisie subordinated to it.

Meanwhile, seeking a legal cover for the revocation of Law 1341—whose sheer criminality has generated mass revulsion against the regime—Paz submitted to the National Assembly a bill to regulate states of exception. The fraud was immediately apparent.

The bill, approved by the Senate on Thursday night, states under Article 26: “The actions carried out by members of the Bolivian Police and the Armed Forces during the state of exception shall enjoy a presumption of legality.” The law additionally establishes state-funded legal representation for any officer prosecuted for acts during the “exception” period, promising impunity for barbaric crimes.

The repression already underway gives concrete expression to these legal preparations. On June 3, more than one hundred police were deployed against a group of mobilized peasants—resisting repression armed only with sticks—who occupied an oil field in the Santa Cruz province. The following day, ten peasants arrested in the operation were submitted to an abbreviated proceeding and sentenced to three years in prison for “criminal association, public instigation to commit crimes, and qualified damage to the state.” None will serve prison time given the sentence length, but all are prohibited from gathering in groups or calling for blockades or occupations on pain of immediate imprisonment.

On the night of Wednesday into Thursday, Justino Apaza, executive secretary of the La Paz Fejuve, was seized outside his home by hooded men in an unmarked vehicle without license plates. A court subsequently ordered six months of his preventive detention at San Pedro prison. The COB issued a statement calling the detention a “cowardly kidnapping” and demanding his immediate release: “We will not allow the dictatorial methods of persecution and kidnapping of social leaders to return.” Former MAS senator Simona Quispe was also seized by hooded men in a vehicle without plates in front of her family in La Paz, with no visible warrant.

Meanwhile, in a video posted to social media, Paz called on “all Bolivian society to mobilize alongside our Armed Forces

and the Police to unblock the country and defend democracy and the Constitution,” warning that “if the country does not move, evidently those from the past will return.”

The social forces Paz is attempting to mobilize are visible in San Julián, Santa Cruz, where a 21-day peasant blockade has placed at risk the Expoagro agricultural fair scheduled for June 12-14. A fascist meeting of the regional “civic committee” ended in a violent clash with the demonstrators. In Yapacaní, civil shock troops established a permanent vigil at the municipal entrance to prevent new blockades.

Against this campaign of brutal repression and amid a desperate economic and social situation facing millions of workers and poor, aggravated by the strike and blockades themselves, the movement has demonstrated a sustained political determination.

A clear expression of the mood prevailing among the working class masses came after a court suspension of the terrorism arrest warrant against COB executive secretary Mario Argollo—the condition the confederation had itself set for entering dialogue with the government. The rank-and-file rejected negotiations regardless, ratified the blockades, and declared the permanent mobilized emergency. As former COB leader Jaime Solares summarized after the confederation’s own internal deliberations: “They don’t want dialogue, they don’t want anything. The only demand the people have now is that the president has to go.”

The Bolivian working class has sustained this uprising for 36 days against everything the government and its imperialist backers have thrown at it. The counterrevolutionary conspiracy being assembled is a measure of this uprising’s strength, not its weakness. But the government is not standing still, and the gap between the determination of the masses and the political leadership they have at their disposal is the most dangerous terrain of the conflict.

The power of the working class in Bolivian society lies in the international nature of this class. It must understand its own insurrection as part of an unfolding international revolutionary crisis that poses directly the question of the world socialist revolution. Only by strategically orienting its struggle in that direction and by appealing to its international class brothers and sisters can it defeat Paz and the reactionary national bourgeoisie and their imperialist patrons.



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