

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

November 25, 2019

Mr. Manuel Gonzalez
Head of Mission, Electoral Observation Mission to Bolivia
Organization of American States
17th Street and Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C., 20006-4499
United States of America

Dear Mr. Gonzalez,

Controversy over the Bolivian national election of October 20 has played a major role in the political conflict there, as well as its understanding both within Bolivia and outside of it.

Much of what governments and the general public believe about the election is based on the work of your Electoral Observation Mission (EOM), which has issued a number of statements and two reports since the election, beginning with the first press release of October 21st.

In that release, the EOM stated the following:

“The OAS Mission expresses its deep concern and surprise at the drastic and hard-to-explain change in the trend of the preliminary results revealed after the closing of the polls.

At 19:40 on Sunday, October 20, the TSE disseminated the results of the TREP. These figures clearly indicated a second round, a trend that coincided with the only authorized quick count and the statistical exercise of the Mission. Our information was shared today with the TSE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At 20:10, the TSE stopped disclosing preliminary results, by decision of the plenary, with more than 80% of the votes counted. 24 hours later, the TSE presented data with an inexplicable change in trend that drastically modifies the fate of the election and generates a loss of confidence in the electoral process.”

This statement itself had a major impact in generating “a loss of confidence in the electoral process,” which colored hundreds of news reports in media outlets throughout Bolivia and the world. A series of statements -- also without evidence -- by Secretary General Luis Almagro also contributed to this “loss of confidence.” He said, “yes. There was a coup in Bolivia. And it happened on October 20, when a fraudulent election was carried out”. He also said the election was “stolen”, several times.

We would therefore like to ask some questions about how the EOM reached these conclusions.

In order of importance:

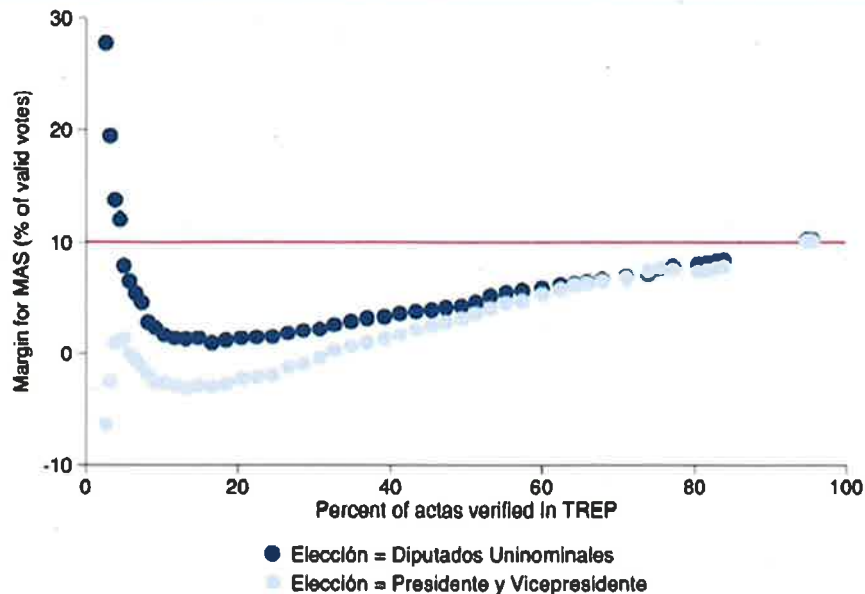
- 1) As is well known, President Evo Morales' margin over the second-place candidate Carlos Mesa increased from 7.9 percent with 84 percent of the votes reported, before the interruption; to 10.14 percent with 95 percent of the votes counted in the TREP count. The margin increased further to 10.6 percent when the official count was complete.

The increase to 10.14 percent is what the EOM statement refers to as "drastic," "hard-to-explain," and "inexplicable;" and also "generates a loss of confidence in the electoral process."

Did the EOM look at the precincts that were reported after the interruption to see if they were different in any ways that would make them more likely to vote for Evo Morales, by a wider margin, than voters in the typical precinct in the first 84 percent of reported votes? If not, why not?

- 2) In its press statements and reports since the election, the EOM does not mention the possibility that the later-reporting precincts contained voters that were, on average, more pro-Morales than the earlier reporting precincts. Aren't such locational differences between earlier and later returns fairly common in elections? Shouldn't the EOM have looked at, and mentioned this possibility?
- 3) Is the EOM aware that the later-reporting precincts actually did turn out to be knowable, before any of these votes were reported, as significantly more pro-Morales than the average precinct in the earlier-reporting areas? Why was this never mentioned in any of the EOM statements and reports?
- 4) Independent statistical analysis as well as arithmetic analysis shows that the increase in Evo Morales' lead from 7.9 percent to more than 10 percent can be explained by, and indeed projected from, the votes contained in the first 84 percent of the TREP count. Why does the EOM call this change in Morales' margin "hard-to-explain" and "inexplicable," if it is in fact predictable from the first 84 percent of voting results?
- 5) Is the EOM aware that the change in Evo Morales' lead was not "drastic," but was in fact a steady, continuous increase that began many hours before the interruption and continued until the end of the TREP count?
- 6) Is the EOM aware that this steady increase in Evo Morales' margin was the result of precincts that were, on average, more pro-Morales reporting their voting results later than precincts that were, on average, less pro-Morales? Why is this apparently obvious conclusion—from the publicly available data -- never mentioned in the EOM press statements or reports?

The MAS-IPSP margin increased steadily through most of the quick count (TREP) as more tally sheets (*actas*) were verified



Source: Órgano Electoral Plurinacional (2019b) and authors' calculations.


CEPR


This graph shows that the lead held by President Evo Morales (light blue dots) and by his party in parliamentary elections (dark blue dots) rose at a steady rate for most of the vote counting. There was no sudden surge at the end to put him over the 10% threshold.

- 7) If the EOM became aware of any of the facts in (3)- (6) above, why did it continue to repeat the insinuations/allegations from the first press statement (cited above), in the Preliminary Report and the Preliminary Audit?
- 8) In its first press release, the EOM did not present any evidence to support the story of “fraud” quoted above. Did it have any evidence? If so, why was it not presented, either in that release or in subsequent publications? Did the EOM consider the potential effect on political violence or stability of putting forth what appears to be a hypothesis of fraud, without any evidence?
- 9) Could you describe the way in which the decision to issue the above statements, including the October 21st press statement and similar statements thereafter, were made? Specifically, was anyone in the OAS outside of the EOM, including but not limited to the Secretary General, or any member government of the OAS, involved in reviewing or advising as to these statements?
- 10) Did the EOM, or other officials of the OAS, to your knowledge, come under pressure from officials of the US government, or any other government, to alter or edit, or omit important information from, any of the statements or reports on the Bolivian election?

11) The EOM's most well-known and reported story of implied fraud, cited above, and repeated in the Preliminary Report and Preliminary Audit, was about the TREP count. Does this count have any legal standing to determine the result of the election? Is it intended, promised, or expected to provide reporting on more than the 84 percent of votes that were reported before the interruption? Is it possible that, since the TREP count has never reported that high a percentage of votes in previous elections, that the electoral authorities or their contractors stopped the quick count at 84 percent because they thought that the TREP count was finished, as it was in prior with a much smaller percentage of votes reported?

Sincerely,


JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress


JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress


BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress


JESUS G. "CHUY" GARCIA
Member of Congress

CC: Luis Almagro, Secretary General, Organization of the American States