
Bolivia: Massive Rallies Launch Evo Morales' Reelection Bid

22/02/2018



Massive rallies were held in four Bolivian departments on Wednesday to launch President Evo Morales' 2019 presidential candidacy. Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) organized the support rallies in collaboration with the Federation of Campesino Workers of Cochabamba, Cocaleros (coca leaf growers) and neighborhood assemblies.

In Cochabamba, Jhonny Pardo, leader of the campesino federation, addressed the crowd of roughly 50,000 MAS supporters saying "we will guarantee the continuation of the process of change, even if it costs us our lives, we will achieve the continuity our brother Evo Morales."

In La Paz, Sandro Ramirez of El Alto's neighborhood assembly rallied supporters in Plaza San Francisco and criticized the opposition. "The right-wing's goal is for Evo (Morales) not to participate in the 2019 elections, of course, because they don't have a candidate," Ramirez said.

In the Tarija and Cobija departments, the MAS party organized separate rallies. Via Twitter Morales thanked his supporters.

"I thank the Bolivian people who demonstrated in several cities to support the Democratic and Cultural Revolution and the Process of Change. Your love makes me commit to continue working for our homeland," Evo wrote.

Morales's opposition also took to the streets in what they called a national civic strike. Alfredo Reda, a government official, said the demonstrations were a failure because "it didn't generate sufficient impact to paralyze productive, service and commercial activities."

The Opposition has, however, vowed to continue their protest with street blockages, and "massive marches". Juan Flores, president of the civic committees, said "we will coordinate with all the institutions an indefinite national civic strike. A national march towards La Paz will follow to ask the president to obey the will of the people."

Rolando Villena, a former Bolivian ombudsman, has also voiced opposition to Morales' candidacy stating that the group, who are opposed to it will request a hearing with the Inter American Commission of Human Rights (ICHR), to present their arguments for the lawsuit against the state.

"We are going to request a hearing so that we can know the state (of the lawsuit) and where we are and continue in this action because there has to be a report from the International Commission on Human Rights," Villena explained.

Opposition groups presented a lawsuit against the decision by Bolivia's Constitutional Tribunal to allow Morales to enter as a candidate in the 2019 presidential elections after Bolivians narrowly rejected a proposed constitutional reform preventing re-election.

Despite the results of 2016 referendum, several international organizations, groups, and political leaders have proclaimed their support for Morales.

Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, a former Spanish president, said while speaking to gathering in Bolivia on Wednesday: "I'm here because I've seen Bolivia change, improve... If there has been a great president that is Evo Morales." Zapatero comments were supported by, Alberto Garzon a Spanish politician, economist, and member of United Left said: "We are twinned, the fight of Evo is the struggle of the peoples and workers of the whole world."
