

Evo Morales to The Grayzone: 'The people have reached their breaking point'

The Grayzone's Oscar Leon interviews Evo Morales, former president of Bolivia and leader of the country's indigenous and peasant sectors, about the national uprising which now threatens the survival of the government of neoliberal President Rodrigo Paz. Morales discusses the factors behind the growing rebellion and the refusal of the pro-US government in La Paz to address its demands. He describes the Paz administration as a cesspool of corruption which has presided over numerous drug trafficking scandals as it seeks to sell the country's land to the highest foreign bidder. Finally, Morales discusses being targeted under the Trump administration's so-called Donroe Doctrine, as leaked documents reveal plans to kidnap him in cooperation with the DEA. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

In Bolivia, a miners' union strike demanding better working conditions has exploded into a massive mobilization of indigenous people and peasants that threatens to topple the new pro-U.S. president, Rodrigo Paz. A series of leaked documents reveal that Paz is colluding with the author of the so-called Monroe Doctrine, U.S. President Donald Trump, to kidnap Evo Morales, the former president of Bolivia and lifelong leader of the indigenous, mining, and peasant movements. Morales responded to the threat by increasing the size of the vigil surrounding his home and even took control of the local airport to prevent American and local forces from entering the area. As the crisis deepened, The Grayzone's Oscar León spoke to Morales about where the protests go next.

#Oscar Leon

Good evening, Mr. Former President. Let's talk a little bit about the protests and the massive demonstrations by the Bolivian people. What is the main demand exactly, and how have the protests fared?

#Evo Morales

Well, thank you very much for this interview. Brother, Oscar León is a tiger.

#Evo Morales

How are you doing, brother? Oscar León, tiger. How is the lion doing? I deeply regret that the current president ended up in office by accident due to the ban preventing Evo from running for the presidency. There was a runoff election, and all three candidates were from the right wing: Doria, Tuto, and Rodrigo Paz, who comes from the same family. Furthermore, they had governed for 20 years under a neoliberal regime, from 1985 to 2005. They left behind a beggar state dependent on handouts. We took office in 2005, and 14 years later, we left behind a state with an average annual economic growth rate of nearly 5%.

This was thanks to pro-people policies, the recovery of our natural resources, and the nationalization of basic services. We pursued economic policies and social programs that directly contradicted the prescriptions of capitalism. We never submitted to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, which advocates for a minimal state — a state that merely regulates but does not invest. During our administration, we achieved growth and stability and lifted 38% of the population out of extreme poverty. We left the country with a 12% growth rate and, as part of our Bicentennial Plan, a target of 0% extreme poverty. Over the course of 180 years, from 1825 to 2005, they had left us with a GDP of just \$9 billion.

#Evo Morales

By 2019, the year of the coup, our gross domestic product had reached \$42 billion. The coup was carried out specifically to halt that progress and dismantle our economic model. I have come to realize that capitalism simply cannot tolerate the existence of any economic model other than neoliberalism. Our political movement, formerly known as the MAS-IPSP and now called Evo Pueblo, possesses a clear vision for the country. For instance, back in 2013 to 2014, we projected that by 2030 we would have 41 lithium processing plants in operation. The coup brought those plans to a halt.

Now the intention is to hand over our lithium resources to transnational corporations. I could say much more about this, but the new government, subservient to the empire — to the North American empire — is transforming us through the neoliberal model into a neocolonial state. This brief period has demonstrated that the plurinational state is sacrosanct and that the Constitution shall not be amended. This means we will not allow basic services, much less our natural resources, to be privatized. It means respect for our identity, for dignity rooted in identity, and for our political and economic sovereignty.

#Evo Morales

Respect for our identity, identity with dignity, respect for political and economic sovereignty.

#Max

Triggered by rising prices and fuel shortages exacerbated by Paz's neoliberal policies, the national revolt is gaining intensity by the day. The government has reacted by unleashing security forces against the strikers. Rejecting dialogue, President Paz appears determined to neutralize the left-wing leaders he holds responsible for the uprising against his government. He's also considering plans to privatize the country's vast mineral reserves, placing them in the hands of transnational oligarchs.

#Evo Morales

There are two issues that led to this situation. First is the reclassification of small-scale agricultural holdings into medium-scale ones. Previously, as stipulated by the Constitution, only medium and large properties were subject to taxation. Small properties, defined as those comprising 500 hectares or less, were considered family patrimony and were therefore exempt. Now, however, laws are being amended to make them taxable. At the same time, the state was unilaterally assigned both an economic and a social function. Another issue concerns land ownership itself. If peasants fail to actively cultivate their land, the state can seize it. Yet this rule does not apply equally to medium- and large-scale properties. It applies only to smallholders.

#Evo Morales

That caused a reaction among the indigenous movement from the west, the valley, and the east.

#Evo Morales

This disparity has triggered the backlash now spreading among indigenous communities across the western, central valley, and eastern regions of the country. Law 1720 was enacted, although it was repealed just yesterday or the day before, but the damage had already been done. Second, in the Department of La Paz, null votes accounted for nearly 25% of all ballots cast for the departmental government. If we factor in both null and blank votes, how can the current administration legitimately claim victory? Revilla won with only 13% of the vote in the runoff election, a result achieved through direct intervention by the central government. The numbers simply do not add up. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal declared, no, there will be no runoff election because the party that fielded the candidate for the second round has withdrawn. Such a move is entirely illegal and unconstitutional. Consequently, the public became outraged, perceiving that democracy itself was under threat.

#Oscar Leon

And it seems that the looting of resources takes place through political means.

#Evo Morales

Just yesterday, the president stated that anyone who fails to respect democracy will be imprisoned.

#Evo Morales

Very well, then those who failed to respect democracy in La Paz should be the ones to go to prison. Even with only days remaining before the elections, political parties continued to be disqualified. Our party, then represented under the name Morena, was disqualified just three hours before the deadline to register candidates. In elections where we were poised to win, even under a borrowed party banner, we were blocked. And in cases where we were set to defeat the government's candidate for governor, the national government itself disqualified us illegally and unjustly. Everything came to a head. It began with wage demands that were ready to be met. He simply said, "I don't have the cash." It escalated into a political crisis because he refused to address people's concerns.

Now it has reached another level, with crowds chanting, "Rodrigo, pause out." Beyond that, there is rampant corruption involving the collection of protection money from drug traffickers. Look, just two quick points. It is incomprehensible how, on a state-owned Bolivian cargo plane under the control of the Bolivian Air Force, pouches of liquid marijuana were allegedly transported from Miami to Santa Cruz. Only one person has been detained so far. The shipment was seized at customs, remained there for a week, and then vanished. The media ignored it. Second, two suitcases packed with U.S. dollars entered the country on a charter flight from Miami to Santa Cruz. An ex-deputy from the party of Camacho, the coup monger and former governor of Santa Cruz, was allegedly involved.

She is currently detained, yet no one has explained why two suitcases full of cash were secretly brought into the country. What is going on here? This government has broken all records when it comes to drug trafficking scandals. There are too many incidents to count. Consequently, the people have reached their breaking point while the government is forgiving or lifting taxes on the fortunes of major business tycoons. And why do I call this a neocolonial government? Because it has proscribed our political movement, seeking to eliminate it entirely. But beyond that, consider the issue of indigenous taxation. Under the previous system, small landholders paid taxes based on the number of hectares they owned. Now, however, a new law proposes that small-scale producers must pay a 5% tax on every 100 Bolivianos in sales revenue at minimum.

Why? If I am selling my own produce or fish, that 5% quickly adds up. If total sales reach 10,000 or 20,000 Bolivianos, the amount becomes significant. That is what enraged the people and drove them to rise up. Now, this movement is unstoppable. This mobilization was officially declared this morning. And starting tonight, the government is imposing a de facto state of exception. The military is being deployed onto the streets. From 1 a.m. until 8 a.m., orders are to clear out the protesters. Clashes are already underway. Since 10 a.m., protesters have forced the military to retreat, and police officers have been ambushed. One person is dead, and several are injured. The forces have withdrawn to their barracks.

#Evo Morales

Until 8 a.m., the military was forced to retreat.

#Evo Morales

The state of exception, a de facto decision now termed a state of siege by the Legislative Assembly, has failed, despite the fact that the Assembly itself lacks legal legitimacy. This is a summary of what is currently unfolding in Bolivia.

#Evo Morales

This is a summary of what is happening in Bolivia.

#Oscar Leon

There's an alleged leaked document which suggests that the U.S. Empire and Trump are plotting to kidnap you as a solution to this indigenous uprising. What is your opinion on this matter? ¿Cuál es su opinión al respecto de eso? El gobierno de Lucho, la encargada de negocios de la Embajada de Estados Unidos,

#Evo Morales

During Luis Arce's administration, the U.S. Embassy's Chargé d'Affaires held a meeting in December 2021. They planned to arrest the most recent commander of the Special Force for the Fight Against Drug Trafficking, Colonel Maximiliano Dávila. And in January 2022, they arrested him. At that point, I still did not understand what was happening. But while they were taking him from the courthouse to prison in handcuffs, the colonel shouted, "They're only doing this to hurt Evo." I heard about it through the press. At the time, I still did not fully understand. February passed, then March, April, and May. Then in June, an active-duty colonel sought me out. I was afraid to meet with him, so I asked a mayor to accompany me.

The colonel told me, "Look, the orders are coming from above." I asked, "From whom?" He replied, "I can't say who, but the order comes from above." That was when I was fully briefed on the matter. What possible connection could the Evo for President movement have with my former commander of the Special Force for the Fight Against Drug Trafficking, Colonel Maximiliano Dávila? They investigated us for months and never found a single phone call linking us. There is absolutely no connection. The colonel told me, "Evo, stay calm. They want to implicate you, but there is nothing there." The defense attorneys for the detained colonel confirmed this. They said state authorities wanted him to testify against Evo in exchange for his release, but there was nothing to testify about.

In fact, from his very first hearing, they told him, "Testify against Evo, and you'll walk free." That is why he shouted those words in court—to warn us that they were doing this solely to hurt Evo. Since he would not cooperate, they took him to the United States. Months ago, speaking from the U.S., he released a sworn statement saying, "The whole point of this was to get me to testify against Evo. Evo has absolutely nothing to do with any of this. I am being unjustly detained." They keep trying, but they cannot make it stick. At the time, I was speaking with one of my former ministers, and he told me, "Evo, for 40 years they've accused you of being a drug trafficker, a murderer, and a terrorist, yet they've never found a shred of evidence against you."

#Max

Evo Morales currently faces prosecution for statutory rape, a charge he adamantly denies. His opponents claim he's stirring chaos to avoid prison.

#Evo Morales

Look, during the coup d'état, once the right wing seized power... They investigated me for corruption during my presidency, and again, they found nothing. There was no corruption linking Evo to drug trafficking or to police officials. Some honest officers even called me while I was in exile in Argentina. They told me, "Look, Evo, Minister Murillo, the Minister of Government, has ordered us to fabricate a link between you and drug trafficking. They've even detained some of our colleagues and offered them \$300,000 to testify against you. But what are they supposed to testify to? What lies are they supposed to invent?" They have not been able to link me to anything. First it was Evo and the drug traffickers.

Then it became, no, Evo is no longer a terrorist or a murderer. Now he's a pedophile. Under Lucho Arce's administration, a police officer came forward alleging a link between Evo and human trafficking. A single police officer—that was the sole basis for the complaint. To sum it up, on May 5th, a young woman whom I know filed a formal affidavit with the sentencing judge stating, "I've never been a victim of anyone. There was never any human trafficking involving Evo." That should have been enough to close the case immediately, but nothing happened. Since they cannot find evidence of corruption or drug trafficking involving Evo, they have resorted to using this young woman. It is absolutely absurd. It reads like a soap opera.

#Evo Morales

Since they cannot find evidence of corruption or drug trafficking involving Evo, they have resorted to using this young woman.

#Oscar Leon

We have spoken with you, as well as with other former presidents and authors, regarding a potential new Condor operation aimed at achieving political domination across the continent. It also involves the persecution of the political opposition, particularly the left. This has been clearly evident in Ecuador, where disinvestment, looting of resources, and one could say a betrayal of the popular vote took place. Furthermore, there is the plundering of natural resources. This appears to be part of a deliberate blueprint for action. We are now witnessing this play out in the Hondurasgate scandal, where leaked messages from Honduras' former president reveal attempts to turn the military against the people in order to repress them.

#Juan Orlando Hernández

Honduras needs force, it needs logistics, it needs blood. If you want to keep the people under control, you have to oppress them, squeeze them, and counter violence by generating violence. Whatever President Trump says, goes.

#Oscar Leon

All of this is taking place while U.S. and Israeli corporations seek to consolidate power. What are your thoughts on this emerging pattern that we're witnessing?

#Evo Morales

I contend that there exists a genocidal triumvirate, one that respects neither life nor humanity and certainly not peace with social justice. It consists of Donald Trump, the president of Israel, and Javier Milei, along with those who stand with them, such as the presidents of Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, and several others. Yet within the new global geopolitical landscape, they are in decline. The U.S. empire recognizes that the rest of the world is no longer naive. Consequently, it is retrenching in Latin America in an attempt to reimpose the Monroe Doctrine and the slogan "America for the Americans." The Cold War strategy no longer serves their purposes, yet Operation Condor remains in effect. In the past, Operation Condor was carried out by colonels and generals. Today, it is executed by judges and prosecutors. Take the cases of Ecuador, Argentina, and Bolivia.

This is also what happened with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. One only needs to look at the underlying logic. I personally saw and read the legal complaint filed against him in which the prosecutor colonel stated, "I have no evidence against Lula, but I have convictions." Therefore, I would argue that their supposed strength rests with Donald Trump. Yet 75% of Americans are calling for his removal from office, and I believe well over 70% disapprove of his performance. As for Milei, he has dispatched two Hercules transport planes loaded with riot control equipment. Just yesterday, here in Bolivia, after only six months in office, more than 60% of the public reportedly disapproved of Rodrigo Paz. I, however, remain optimistic. I am almost certain that the protests will succeed. In Colombia, the president's political agenda appears poised to be ratified. In Colombia, what's the name...

#Evo Morales

And in Mexico, we are also doing well. In Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is going to be ratified. We are doing well in Argentina as well. I am certain we will reclaim it. If Evo Morales were allowed to run as a candidate in Bolivia, we would win with at least 60%. If I were permitted to be a candidate, I would win—60% or even more. But this is yet another example demonstrating that, in reality, democracy no longer exists. They use the pretext of freedom to privatize health care and education. What kind of freedom is that? The right's version of freedom—freedom to privatize basic services.

That is no freedom at all. Still, there is a resurgence of hope driven by social movements. There will undoubtedly be new developments in the coming years because the economic situation facing the working class in Bolivia is utterly devastating. There are brothers and sisters who have electricity connections but lack the money to pay their utility bills, so they live by candlelight. Some are even forced to cook with firewood. It is truly dire. And on top of that, taxes are imposed on small-scale earners rather than on wealthy elites. Consequently, the people are rising up, and rightly so.

#Evo Morales

To put an end to this form of subjugation—subjugation through humiliation and economic enslavement—let us hope they are no longer able to keep families captive in this way.

#Oscar Leon

Another similarity shared by Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia is the strength of their indigenous movements. I believe Bolivia is home to the strongest indigenous movement, although the movement in Ecuador was once also very powerful. However, their recent uprisings have not succeeded. The Ecuadorian state has become increasingly violent and militaristic. Indigenous movements have faced persecution and continue to be targeted through campaigns of lawfare. Thus, the state, together with U.S. and international corporations, actively supports and persists in targeting indigenous movements because of their defense of natural resources.

One could therefore argue that these corporations have effectively conquered Ecuador. Now, their greatest challenge, their next major hurdle, is unfolding in Bolivia. There, the indigenous movement, which is extraordinarily strong, as we can currently witness in the streets, is arguably the most capable in Latin America. It represents one of the last remaining hopes for resisting this model of plunder that is being imposed across the continent. The people on the streets seek to assert a measure of sovereignty and fulfill a role abandoned by right-wing governments—defending the people. We know these governments, instead of investing in the public good, resort to brutalizing the poor.

#Evo Morales

Fundamentally, in Ecuador, CONAIE and FENOCIN were our allies during the neoliberal era. During the 1980s and 1990s, we shared major struggles and gatherings alongside the CCP and CNA of Peru, the CUT of Guatemala, and many indigenous teachers. Indigenous peoples are the true owners of this noble land, the original inhabitants. Yet those who arrived in Latin America after the First and Second World Wars or after the Spanish Civil War, and whose children were born here, are also, in a sense, part of this land. I call them contemporary original inhabitants. From within the indigenous movement, we conceived the plurinational state. What is plurinationality? It is unity and diversity. Diversity is our pride. It emerged from a movement rooted in dignity.

The indigenous way of life is based on solidarity, complementarity, and above all, harmony with Mother Earth. Our ancestors never knew judges, prosecutors, soldiers, or police officers, yet they had their own rules and systems. These were based on Ama Quella: do not be lazy; Ama Sua: do not steal; and Ama Llulla: do not lie. These have guided us since the Inca Empire. Today, we have countless prosecutors, soldiers, and police officers supposedly dedicated to justice and security, yet they solve nothing. I governed according to those three principles—Ama Quella, Ama Sua, and Ama Llulla. Even though these principles are now part of Bolivia's constitution, neoliberal governments no longer respect them. What does that tell us? Through imperial policies and the prescriptions of capitalism, an agenda has been imposed to subjugate popular sectors.

#Evo Morales

Which are social claims. But when social claims are not met, we move to the demand for structural change to the neoliberal model.

#Evo Morales

They insist that labor and indigenous movements must remain apolitical and stay out of politics altogether. They preach ideological pluralism. If a union becomes politicized, they do not seek unity, they seek division. But we must not allow ourselves to be divided, whether we lean right or left. I come from a tradition of communal struggle. We organize to fight for social demands. But when those demands are ignored, we move toward demanding structural change to the neoliberal model. We combine social struggle with political transformation. Marches and mobilizations may help secure a school, a road, a sports field, or a hospital, but they cannot remove a military base or nationalize basic services and natural resources. That is why political power is essential. Our movement evolved from communal and union struggle into a political and electoral struggle grounded in principles, values, and historical memory.

#Evo Morales

When we came to power, we closed the military base and nationalized basic services. Electricity, telecommunications, hydrocarbons, and natural gas were all controlled by foreigners. Of all revenue generated, 82% went to transnational corporations, while only 18% went to the Bolivian people. For

every million BTUs of gas, the corporations paid just \$1. I negotiated with Brazil, which agreed to raise the price to \$8 per million BTUs, and with Argentina, which raised it to \$10. That is how we improved the economy. As a result, Bolivia now leads the region in indicators related to indigenous well-being. That is why the indigenous movement has declared, enough is enough. If we continue to face mistreatment, even teachers who are overwhelmingly indigenous, we will no longer tolerate the neoliberal model or accept a neocolonial state.

That is the essence of our struggle, and it would be wonderful to build alliances again as we did in the past. I have now been confined for more than a year, though I still maintain some contacts. I only hope things go well for us in Peru during the second round of elections. I was pleasantly surprised that Pedro Castillo's movement reached the runoff. Yet just as the election approaches, the justice system suddenly revives legal cases involving our brother Sánchez. Something is clearly wrong. And who could have imagined that just days before the election he would be barred from running? That is the final indignity. That is justice held captive. That is why I say that today those carrying out Operation Condor are judges and prosecutors.

#Evo Morales

That is justice held captive. That is why I say that now those carrying out Operation Condor are judges and prosecutors.

#Oscar Leon

One more question, with your permission, Mr. Former President. You are one of the most representative and historic popular leaders still remaining. And right now, you find yourself in a difficult position where, as I understand it, a vigil is being held around your home to defend your safety against a possible invasion, a foreign military operation intended to kidnap you. I would like to know, first, how are you feeling? And second, what message would you have for the youth, both Latin American and North American, should anything happen to you?

#Evo Morales

On October 27, 2024,

#Evo Morales

On October 27, 2024, while I was traveling from my home along the Tunari Route to the headquarters of the Six Federations at Radio Kawsachun Coca, an attempt was made to detain me involving three helicopters along with military personnel and police officers. Fortunately, we survived despite being subjected to bursts of gunfire. Shots were fired in volleys. We barely escaped alive. My

driver was wounded, and two of our vehicles were riddled with bullets, their tires completely destroyed. Further down the road, we were forced to stop and replace the tires. They were trying to cut us off. I believe my mother, may she rest in peace, saved my life.

I am currently protected by a vigil organized here under very difficult circumstances. The people mobilized. At first, they said it would last three days. I replied, it doesn't matter, I don't want to impose. But the vigil continued. A thousand comrades now take turns standing watch day and night without interruption. They represent the agrarian unions. They refuse to allow me to be detained. There is a mandate from the grassroots base here: protect Evo. It has already been more than a year. By October, it will be two years. Yesterday, I attended a meeting, and the vigil has intensified again because there has been another attempt to detain me.

The deployment of three helicopters on October 27, 2024, was an operation designed either to detain Evo or to kill him. We filed a formal complaint with the public prosecutor's office during the administration of Luis Arce, which claims to be a government of struggle, yet to this day, no one has been investigated over those shootings. I simply cannot comprehend it. It happened twice and still nothing. I made inquiries and was told that one of the helicopters was piloted by a Colombian national. I have many comrades in the Bolivian Air Force who previously served as my aides-de-camp and pilots. Why would a Colombian national be piloting a state-owned helicopter belonging to the Bolivian Air Force?

As police and armed forces personnel later confided to me, the Colombian national was allegedly a CIA operative. I cross-checked the information, and it was confirmed to me that the CIA piloted a helicopter as part of the operation to detain me. It is a grave matter. Still, my conscience is at peace. I feel well. Last week I experienced some health problems, but I have recovered and now feel very good. There is a great deal of commitment throughout the region right now. The youth must identify both the internal and external demons. To me, the internal enemies are the right-wing forces in every country. The external enemies are the agents of empire and the prescriptions of capitalism, governments acting on behalf of transnational corporations through the privatization of health care and education.

As I have said repeatedly, they are targeting basic services and, above all, natural resources. They are implementing a new Monroe Doctrine within this geopolitical context as the United States retrenches in Latin America to reassert its dominance. Let me clarify, perhaps by repeating myself. In my view, the United States has no military power without NATO. It is no longer the unquestioned global hegemon. It has suffered defeat in Iran. With the political containment of our brother Nicolás Maduro, which amounts to a stalemate, they have secured control over Venezuelan oil. The country is now selling oil to the United States under pressure. A private American company is purchasing it.

They seek full control of the oil, yet they have not completely achieved it. Therefore, the youth must identify who the true enemies of life are, the enemies of democracy, and who opposes peace with social justice. As I mentioned earlier regarding Latin America, these forces operate through economic

blockades and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. And just as social movements have fought, they have also contributed immensely to the well-being of their peoples. I myself come from that very struggle, having risen from the very bottom since I was a young boy. That is all, brothers. Thank you very much. I am grateful for this connection and for this interview.

#Evo Morales

We thank you very much for your time, Mr. Former President. We are closely following developments, and we wish the Bolivian people and you all the best. Thank you. Thank you. A big hug. See you soon.