

## achievements in Bolivia under Evo Morales

Posted by Joan Russow

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Exerpt from

Randy Caravaggio's talk on Bolivia

### **Double Standards & Hypocrisy**

13 years ago Evo Morales was elected president of Bolivia. Although Bolivia's population is composed 2/3 of indigenous people, he was the 1st indigenous president to be elected.

Morales won in 2005 with 53.7% of the vote, followed by re-elections in 2009 with 64.2% and 2014 with 61.3%.

The accomplishments under his leadership in Bolivia are incredible and too numerous to mention all, but I will mention just a few to give us some ideas of how much was accomplished with an honest government that had the will to work for its people and country.

With brother Evo, Bolivia's economy was elevated to one of the best in Latin America.

Social benefits for the lowest and poorest class that were the overwhelming majority of Bolivia's population increased like never before. How was this achieved? By the end of 2013 the state-owned portion of the economy reached 35%, double that of previous neoliberal governments. The state had become the main generator of wealth, and public investment amounted to over \$5 billion in 2016, compared to a mere \$629 million in 2006. Much of this new revenue funded the country's impressive development, infrastructure, and community projects, such as schools, gyms, clinics, roads, and subsidies for agricultural production. It was spent on the people's health and education, on price controls for staple foods, on wage increases, and social security benefits.

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By nationalizing gas and oil, as well as telecommunications, water, electricity and numerous mines the government reduced poverty from 60% in 2005 to 38% in 2016. Minimum wage rose from \$57 to \$287. Unemployment was reduced from 8.5% to less than 4%, the lowest in Latin America. Electricity was brought to 66% of the homes of the rural population, up from 25% in 2001. Over 127,000 homes were built for low income Bolivians who lacked housing. Another 23,000 homes were built in 2018. Infant mortality since 2008 was cut by half.

900,000 Bolivians who had received no pensions were given pensions. Incapacitated and disabled people were given \$36 monthly and guaranteed job placement in public and private institutions.

The Illiteracy rate was 13% when Evo became president. After a mass literacy campaign that used Cuba's YES I CAN program, 850,000 people became literate and by 2008 Bolivia was declared free of illiteracy. The country became second to Cuba in Latin America in terms of funding education. Life expectancy was increased from 64 years to 71 years.

Before Evo came to power 5% of property owners owned 70% of the arable land. From 2006 to 2010 over 35 million hectares of land (one third of Bolivia), was handed over to Indigenous peoples' peasant communities to be run communally. Another 21 million hectares previously occupied illegally by large landowners were declared public lands, mostly protected forests.

New presidential elections took place a few weeks ago on October 20. Bolivians once again chose Evo as their president. On October 21st when it was announced by the Electoral Tribunal that Evo had won with more than a 10 point lead over his opponent, but his opponents called for protests. Violent riots quickly erupted across the country.

The rioters burned down the houses of two governors as well as the house of the sister of President Morales. They also took over two state media outlets and threatened their staff. The signal of Bolivia TV was taken off air for more than eight hours. Along with the riots the Organization of American States, a tool for US domination of the region since it was created, stated that the election was fraudulent without giving any proof. In the midst of this situation Evo called for new elections, but the opposition kept up the rioting, threats and intimidation tactics. The army and police also joined in stating to the president that he must resign. Evo stated that he didn't want to have any blood in his hands and along with most of his party's elected members and numerous mayors resigned. The next day Evo and his vice president ended up in Mexico as political refugees.

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Since then, right-wingers, police and the army have created a state of terror against Evo's supporters. Supporters of Morales's Movement for Socialism's party have been rounded up in their homes, public officials paraded in front of television cameras by masked police, and the army sent onto the streets. In one instance, the mayor of Vinto, in the Movement for Socialism's heartland of Cochabamba, was captured by putchist mobs which shaved her hair, doused her in red paint (the color of the right wing in Bolivia) and forced her to walk barefoot through Vinto, kneel down, and beg for forgiveness for supporting Morales. It is understood that she refused to apologize and was eventually rescued by pro-Morales demonstrators, but this did not stop the mob from burning Vinto's town hall. Until now 30 people have been killed and who knows how many others have been abused, threatened, beaten or injured. There's been no major complaint against the actions of Bolivian fascist forces from the Canadian government.