

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 22, 2020

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We are deeply concerned with the lack of accountability and transparency regarding the role of the Organization of American States (OAS) in last year's election and political crisis in Bolivia. As the *New York Times* recently [noted](#), OAS claims of electoral fraud following Bolivia's October 2019 elections were "seized on" by President Evo Morales's political opponents "to escalate protests, gather international support, and push Mr. Morales from power with military support weeks later."

Given that the OAS has been invited to monitor Bolivia's next elections—scheduled for September 6th and postponed until October 18th—we urge the administration to use its voice at the OAS to advocate for a thorough, independent assessment of the OAS's statements and reports regarding Bolivia's 2019 elections.

As you are likely aware, the de facto authorities that seized power following Morales' forced resignation have promoted a [racist, anti-indigenous agenda](#) and deployed the military to [violently repress protests](#), resulting in the [killing and injury of many civilians](#). OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro was quick to [recognize](#) the unelected president, Jeanine Añez, and has failed to speak out regarding the deterioration of human rights and persecution of political opponents taking place under her rule.

A study casting doubt on the OAS claims was featured in a [June 7 report](#) in the *New York Times*. It concluded, as previous independent analyses have done, that claims by the OAS of an "inexplicable change" in the trend of the vote count following the October election are based on an apparently flawed statistical analysis. Instead of responding to this and other critiques of OAS claims in a meaningful fashion, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro has engaged in [ad hominem attacks](#) against their authors, as well as an attack on the reporting of the *New York Times*, suggesting that it is a purveyor of fake news. The OAS has also refused to answer basic questions from researchers, media outlets or from [Members of Congress](#) regarding its press statements, the data it used, or how it reached its conclusions.

In February of this year, the government of Mexico, backed by other regional governments, [called on](#) the OAS Secretary General to authorize an independent review of the OAS electoral department's analysis of Bolivia's 2019 elections as well as an assessment of the human rights violations reportedly caused by erroneous OAS assertions regarding those elections. It is our understanding that they have yet to receive a response.

In light of the fact that the OAS has been invited to monitor Bolivia's next presidential election, it is particularly concerning that Secretary Almagro and his colleagues continue to avoid answering for statements and actions that may have contributed to the erosion of democracy and human rights in Bolivia. The U.S. Congress appropriates the majority of the OAS's budget. We therefore have a responsibility to ensure that American taxpayer dollars are used to support

organizations that function transparently and that uphold democratic norms rather than undermine them.

The OAS is poised to make a determination of the freedom, fairness, and integrity of the upcoming elections in Bolivia, even as under the unelected Añez government, various high-profile political opponents—including leading presidential candidate Luis Arce—face dubious charges that include corruption, terrorism, and sedition. Government critics in the media and indigenous and trade union leaders have also been detained and threatened, while military force has been deployed against nonviolent protesters. Despite initially claiming to play merely a caretaker role during the interim period, Añez has repeatedly delayed elections and reversed her position in order to run for president herself.

Given this troubling situation, we urge you to use the diplomatic resources of the State Department to immediately seek a full, independent review of OAS statements and reports regarding Bolivia's 2019 elections. In addition, our government should work with other OAS members to ensure that corrective measures are taken to ensure that future OAS electoral observation missions perform their functions in an independent, impartial and professional manner.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Jan Schakowsky  
United States Representative



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
United States Representative



Deb Haaland  
United States Representative

Barbara Lee  
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Andy Levin  
James P. McGovern  
Ilhan Omar  
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Bobby Rush  
Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Rashida Tlaib  
Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Ayanna Pressley  
Joseph P. Kennedy III

Earl Blumenauer  
Alan Lowenthal  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Pramila Jayapal  
Susan Wild  
Mark Pocan  
Frederica S. Wilson  
Maxine Waters  
Jared Huffman  
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