

Evo Morales invites international community for election audit



La Paz, October 26 (RHC)-- Bolivian socialist leader Evo Morales invited the international community to audit the presidential election results, as opposition cried fraud and burned ballots, while Washington cast doubt on results.

Bolivia's election authority confirmed the final tally for the contentious vote on Friday, handing Morales his fourth presidential term. However, opposition leaders called for protests.

Evo Morales avoided a second-round runoff with his rival Carlos Mesa by a few percentage points and the incumbent and newly-reelected president denies accusations of fraud. He said that international auditors would be free to inspect the final tally and the vote counting process.

"Let them come here, let them know how much they have earned [...] We never lie or hide," he said, but added elsewhere that the world community had "the obligation to respect our Political Constitution of State, they have to respect the will of the Bolivian people."

The remarks were directed at the Organization of American States (OAS) – based in Washington, DC – which previously expressed "deep concern" and "surprise" over the delayed vote tally. More recently, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro argued the election results should not be considered valid until an audit is complete.

In a joint statement issued on Thursday, the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and the United States (all OAS members) called for a second round of voting in the event a proper audit could not be carried out.

Mesa, a former president and Morales's main challenger, said on Friday that he would lodge a formal complaint with the Supreme Election Tribunal over the result, which he condemned as a "massive fraud." And he has encouraged his supporters to reject the outcome as well.

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