

Bolivian president warns of violence as opposition threatens coup



La Paz, November 3 (RHC)-- Bolivia's government accused its rivals Sunday of plotting deadly violence against it after an opposition figure vowed to oust leftist President Evo Morales and called for the military's support.

Deadly unrest has gripped the South American country since Morales was named winner of the October 20 election for a fourth term. His opponents have branded the result a fraud, while some protesters are rejecting both candidates and demanding fresh elections.

Over the weekend, a conservative opposition leader in the eastern Santa Cruz region threatened to drive Evo Morales out. "He has 48 hours to step down, because at 7:00 p.m. (2300 GMT) on Monday, we are going to take decisive action right here and we are going to make sure that he goes," Luis Fernando Camacho told a gathering of supporters. He called on the military to "be on the side of the people."

Morales responded by accusing his opponents of seeking bloodshed. "They want people to be killed by the police and the military," he said in a televised interview.

Interior Minister Carlos Romero alleged a "coup strategy" was under way. He told reporters the government had intelligence "indicating that a violent confrontation is being prepared" for Monday night near the presidential palace in La Paz. "Whoever asks for military intervention is asking for blood and is asking for death," Romero said.

Camacho did not specify what kind of action he had in mind. His supporters have previously taken over public buildings. The military has so far stayed neutral in the electoral dispute but calling on it to intervene is a delicate move in Bolivia.

The country saw numerous military uprisings and dictatorships before civilian rule was established in 1982.

The Organization of American States is carrying out an audit of the vote. The opposition has rejected that as a distraction to help Evo Morales hold on to power, despite the fact that the OAS has expressed opposition to the presidency of Evo.

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