

Video Shows Bolivian Miners Threatened Minister Before Murder



La Paz, August 31 (RHC)-- A new report says that Bolivian miners shouted death threats at Deputy Minister Rodolfo Illanes while holding him hostage only moments before he was beaten to death. A video has surfaced in Bolivia showing the deputy minister pleading for help as a lynch mob threatens him in the moments before he was fatally beaten. The video led police to identify five men in connection with the slaying.

The new evidence in the case shows a group of miners surrounding Deputy Minister of the Interior Rodolfo Illanes, threatening the politician as he pleads for help on his cell phone. "It's life or death!" shouts one miner in the video clip. "Ten minutes or else we butcher him!" cries another. "I'm going to make him scream," says a third person in the video.

The clip was released by Bolivian journalist Carlos Valverde, who posted the video in his Facebook account with the caption "Vice Minister Illanes, surrounded by miners, very scared, crying for help by phone." Officials have said Illanes suffered multiple injuries while being tortured for several hours and died from blunt force trauma to the head.

Based on the video, the Attorney General's office has identified five suspects, although their names have not been released. Nine suspects have already been jailed in connection with the killing, including Carlos Mamani, president of the Fencomin national mining cooperative federation, which has organized the protests. Police say he orchestrated the kidnapping and murder.

Four other people were killed last week amid miner protesters. Three died during clashes that broke out between striking miners and riot police, while the fourth was reportedly killed as a result of bad handling of explosives among miners. The government has promised a thorough investigation into the deaths.

President Evo Morales has called on miners to stop using highway blockades and dynamite as part of their protests. He has also accused the miners of waging a destabilization campaign against his government with backing from right-wing political groups.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has also condemned the killing and urged authorities to guarantee an impartial and complete investigation into the case while taking steps to remedy the bitter conflict.

Illanes was reportedly making a visit to promote dialogue with protesting miners when he was kidnapped about 80 miles south of La Paz, according to local media.

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