

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: AMR 18/015/2003**

**20 October 2003**

**Further Information on UA 289/03 (AMR 18/010/2003, 14 October 2003) Fear for safety/ Excessive use of force**

**BOLIVIA** **Participants in mass demonstrations**

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Mass protests around Bolivia involving peasants, trade unionists, and sector of civil society have ended. Hunger strikes and most roadblocks around the country have also stopped. On the evening of 17 October, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada resigned and left the country shortly afterwards. The Ministers of Defence and Government have also resigned and left the country. Vice-President Carlos Meza Gisbert has been appointed President by Congress, in line with constitutional requirements.

In his speech to Congress, the new President stated that a referendum on natural gas policy will be organized, a constituent assembly will be convened and the energy law (Hydrocarbon Law) will be reformed. According to the constitution, Carlos Meza Gisbert can serve out the rest of former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's term, which was due to end in August 2007. However Carlos Meza Gisbert has proposed new elections when Congress finds it appropriate.

On 19 October, in his first public pronouncement as president, Carlos Meza Gisbert committed himself to bringing those responsible for the deaths that occurred in recent demonstrations to justice, in civilian courts. He has also appointed a new cabinet and in a ceremony with the armed forces was formally recognized as Head of the Bolivian Armed Forces.

**Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. No further action is required from the network at present, but we will continue to monitor the situation.**