

URGENT ACTION

RESEARCHERS AT RISK FOR DENOUNCING FRAUD

On 24 October Edgar Villegas, systems engineer and analyst, denounced irregularities in Bolivia's general elections of 20 October on public TV. His study done with other academics pointed to large discrepancies between the preliminary count and the final electoral results that gave victory to incumbent president Evo Morales. Following the TV interview Villegas, his family, and Mónica Ximena Galarza, the journalist who interviewed him, were intimidated. These incidents happened in a wider context of repression by the authorities in response to social protests following the election results.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Minister of Government, Mr. Carlos Romero
Av. Arce esq. Belisario Salinas N° 2409, La Paz, Bolivia
Phone: + 591 2 2440466, +591 2 2120002
Email: info@mingobierno.gob.bo; comunicacion@comunicacion.gob.bo
Twitter: @MindeGobierno, @CarlosGuRomero*

Minister Romero,

On 24 October, journalist Mónica Ximena Galarza Lorca interviewed analyst Edgar Villegas on TVU (University Television). Edgar Villegas made public data that pointed to irregularities in the counting of the electoral results of the presidential election of 20 October.

Following the interview, Mónica Ximena Galarza Lorca received hundreds of messages on her cell phone from unknown numbers, some threatening to act against her. Edgar Villegas, his family, and Mónica Ximena Galarza told Amnesty International that they were followed by a series of vehicles – both taxis and dark vehicles with tinted windows upon leaving the television studio. Villegas told Amnesty International that during recent days his friends have received phone calls from his cell phone number, even though his telephone has been off since the interview. Strange vehicles and persons have been spotted outside their homes at various times. On 25 October, the website of University Television (TVU) went down for several hours without any explanation, and according to the television station, an alternative website for their channel appeared during this time.

We urge you to guarantee the safety of Edgar Villegas and Mónica Ximena Galarza Lora, as well as their families.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Edgar Villegas's study, published on television on 24 October, used public information to demonstrate large discrepancies between the preliminary count and final count of electoral results of the 20 October presidential election in Bolivia, which determined electoral victory for the incumbent president Evo Morales.

Following the presidential elections, thousands of people have protested in response to what they consider an electoral fraud. The authorities of Bolivia in many cases have reacted in a repressive manner to these protests, and Amnesty International has expressed concern in this regard. See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/bolivia-autoridades-deben-respetar-derecho-protesta-pacifica/>.

Edgar Villegas is a recognized system engineer and analyst that graduated from a Bachelor of Systems Engineering in the Catholic Bolivarian University "San Pablo" in 2007. Since then he has participated in a series of national and international teams in relation to public information and transparency. Besides his recent work, he also carried out similar work in 2016 where he used public information to denounce electoral fraud. In response he received intimidations and hostile messages. However, he told Amnesty International that this current response to his work has a higher intensity than the response to his work in 2016.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 9 December 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: **Edgar Villegas** (he, his) and **Mónica Ximena Galarza Lora** (she, her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/a