



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Bolivia

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2006](#)

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Bolivia is a constitutional, multiparty democracy with a population of 8.5 million. In December 2005 in a generally free and fair process, citizens elected Evo Morales Ayma, an indigenous politician and coca union leader, as president. Morales took office January 22, and under his administration the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

On July 2, citizens elected a Constituent Assembly (CA) to re-write the country's constitution, and Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party won 137 of the 255 available CA seats. The election did not give the MAS the two-thirds majority needed to approve constitutional changes, which became a growing source of tension between the MAS and opposition parties. Nonetheless, the MAS used a simple majority vote to give the CA plenipotentiary powers to "re-found" the state (as opposed to simply revising the constitution), an action taken over the objections of the opposition. At year's end the MAS and the opposition remained deadlocked over the CA's voting rules.

While the government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, there were problems in some areas. The most significant human rights problems were abuses by security forces, including several deaths; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; threats to civil liberties, including the right to a fair and public trial, press and religious freedoms; corruption and a lack of transparency in government; discrimination based on gender and ethnicity; trafficking in persons; child labor; and brutal working conditions in the mining sector.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

The government or its agents did not commit any politically motivated killings during the year. Nevertheless, three persons were killed, dozens were injured, and several others were held hostage during violent demonstrations in Oruro and Cochabamba (see section 2.b.). Additionally, security forces killed at least four persons in unrelated events during the year.

On June 9, off-duty police officer Santiago Orocando Arevillca was shot and killed during a conflict with security forces (see section 2.b.).

On July 5, naval officer Wilder Rene Blanco Mendoza was found dead in El Alto; his body showed signs of torture. Officer Blanco had disappeared on June 16. The prime suspects, the last two individuals to have seen him, were also military officers. The case remained under investigation at year's end.

On September 29, 50 to 60 security force members attempted to enter the Carrasco national park to eradicate coca. Reportedly, approximately 200 armed coca growers (coccaleros) conducted a surprise attack on the security force, which resulted in the death of coccaleros Rember Guzman Zambrana and Celestino Rinaldi, as well as eight injuries and the taking of nine police hostages. The police were set free after security forces released four people detained in the attack.

There were several deaths due to prison violence during the year (see section 1.c.).

During the year vigilante action killed at least four persons (see section 1.c.). On June 28, a mob of approximately 400 residents of El Alto lynched a presumed thief. On July 24, in Pampa San Miguel, Cochabamba, a 22-year-old man was severely beaten and burned by his neighbors, who accused him of sexually assaulting a senior citizen. He died two days later. On August 6, neighbors beat to death one of two suspected intruders in Villa Nueva, Potosi, after residents came to the aid of their neighbor, who discovered the suspects in her home. On October 28, citizens burned to death Juan Pesoa Chuve of the indigenous community of Puesto Nuevo de Lomerio in Santa Cruz Department. According to preliminary police findings, an ad hoc people's tribunal sentenced him for having committed acts of witchcraft that harmed his community. (The penal code has no law against witchcraft.)

In the January 2005 case in which naval officer Ruben Dario Rojas shot and killed a 12-year-old boy in Riberalta, on July 1, authorities sentenced Dario to three years in prison.

There were no developments regarding the June 2005 death of Carlos Coro Mayta, who was killed by unknown actors during civil unrest outside the city of Sucre. The government indemnified the family for his death, and the investigation continued at year's end.

The case of the August 2005 death of military conscript Fredy Moises Kanqui, shot and killed by army officer Luis Fernando Pereara Ramos, was still pending in a military court at year's end, and Pereara remained in preventive detention.

There were no new developments in the August 2005 case of police officer Santiago Calderon Romero, killed during a confrontation in Santa Cruz, or in the September 2005 case of Gumerindo Mamani, Damaso Condori, and Dionicio Flores, killed on the outskirts of El Alto in Viacha in a dispute between two communities over land ownership.

There were no developments in the investigations of the 2004 deaths of officer Saul Coronado and two peasants, Hernan Masay and Eddy Argmon, during confrontations between security forces and civilians in the town of San Pablo.

There were no new developments in the investigations of the 2004 confrontations between coccaleros and security forces inside the Isiboro Secure nature reserve, which resulted in the deaths of coccaleros Juan Colque and Genaro Canaviri.

There were no developments and none were expected in the investigation of the 2004 killing of Medrin Colque Mollo, presumably by police, during a confrontation between more than 100 squatters and security forces.

On March 17, judicial authorities freed Spanish citizen Francisco Javier Villanueva and Freddy Hurtado, suspects in the 2004 murder of prosecutor Monica von Borries in Santa Cruz. Judicial authorities ruled that Brazilians Ricardo Borba Mezquita and Sandro Carvalho, who escaped from a Santa Cruz prison in 2005, as well as Italian Marco Marino Diodato, who remained at large, were responsible for the murder (see section 1.c.).

In the case of the 2004 lynching of Ayo Ayo Mayor Benjamin Altamirano, authorities filed formal criminal charges consisting of conspiracy, deprivation of freedom, coercion, kidnapping, and murder against 25 suspects. Rufino Penafiel and Nicanor Mamani, both sentenced in 2005 for their association with the killing, were released from prison. Three other persons were tried and sentenced to no more than five years in prison. In December 2005 police arrested the principal suspect and alleged mastermind of the crime, Cecilio Huanca, in Santa Cruz. The oral arguments phase of the trial against 18 suspects began on October 31; judgment was pending at year's end.

With respect to the government's case against former president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada and his cabinet for the approximately 59 deaths and more than 400 persons injured in the October 2003 civil unrest, on April 11, the government formally charged military officers Juan Veliz Herrera, Luis Aranda, Oswaldo Quiroga, Roberto Claros, and Gonzalo Rocabado with genocide, murder, conspiracy, and "violating individual guarantees" and the "expressed tenor of the constitution." On December 4, the prosecutor ordered that the former president's daughter appear and provide information on her father's involvement in the events of October 2003. On December 18, the attorney general formally presented charges against the former president, which included genocide, multiple counts of homicide and assault leading to injuries, deprivation of civil liberties, torture, slander, acts against the freedom of press, destruction of property, and other acts contrary to the constitution.

The government's delay in completing effective investigations and identifying and punishing those responsible for either civilian or security force deaths resulted in a perception of impunity. The congressional human rights committee, the ombudsman's office, the Vice Ministry of Justice and its Directorate of Human Rights, citizens' groups, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continued to press the government to expedite action in a number of cases under investigation or within the court system.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them. There were a number of allegations of vigilante violence that resulted in extrajudicial abuses against persons (see section 1.a.). Although there were no specific reports of beatings and abuse by members of security forces, the human rights ombudsman released a report in December 2005 stating that of all government institutions, police were the most frequent violators of human rights.

The Chimore Center for Justice and Human Rights (CCJHR), which was converted into an Integrated Justice Center, received 12 complaints of security force abuse during the year from citizens in the Chapare region. Cases were not formally filed with the Public Ministry but instead were referred for action to the police Office of Professional Responsibility.

Indigenous communities in areas with little or no government presence imposed punishments that reportedly included the death penalty for members who violated traditional laws or rules, although the constitution prohibits the death penalty. The burning of Juan Pesoa Chuve (see section 1.a.) was an example of "communitarian justice" that contradicted the formal legal system. Vigilante justice was a regular occurrence in the mostly indigenous city of El Alto, where images of presumed thieves were hung routinely in effigy near stores and markets.

In addition to the lynchings cited in section 1.a., there were press reports of 16 attempted lynchings during the year. On March 10, a group of neighborhood residents confused Jose Luis Lopez for a thief and tied Lopez to a venomous ant tree for three hours until police released him. At year's end the police were still investigating this case. Also in March union members, including Carlos Delgadillo and Constantino Quinteros, tied coca farmer Juan Chavez to a venomous ant tree for two hours for failing to attend a March 15 union meeting. The police detained five suspects at year's end.

Law enforcement officials complained of the danger of intervening in lynchings because they were frequently outnumbered by neighborhood residents with whom they had to negotiate to gain the release of suspected criminals into government custody. In neighborhoods known for lynching attempts, residents attempted to justify vigilante action by asserting a lack of local law enforcement.

There were no new developments in the December 2005 beating of Alvaro Guzman, director of human rights for the Vice Ministry of Justice, by La Paz police officers Rene de Rio Rosales, Mario Vaca, and Edgar Choque.

There were no new developments and none were expected in the public ministry investigation of accusations that Santa Cruz police tortured Spanish citizen Francisco Javier Villanueva in 2004 in connection with the car bombing of State Prosecutor Monica Von Borries (see section 1.a.).

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions were harsh. Prisons were overcrowded and in poor condition. At year's end there were 6,915 (5,934 men, 981 women) inmates in facilities designed to hold 4,700 prisoners. Overpopulated jails included: San Pedro in La Paz by 500 percent, Mocovi by 345 percent, and the women's jail in La Paz by 300 percent. Prison escapes were common; on June 30, 10 persons escaped from Bahia prison in Puerto Suarez. With the exception of the maximum-security prison of Chonchocoro in El Alto, government authorities effectively controlled only the outer security perimeter of each prison. Inside prison walls, prisoners usually maintained control, and criminal gangs operated from their cells without hindrance.

Violence among prisoners, and in some cases the involvement of prison officials in violence against prisoners, were problems. On April 13, prisoners killed five fellow inmates during an uprising in the Palmasola prison in Santa Cruz.

Corruption was a problem among low-ranking and poorly paid guards and prison wardens. The number of persons held in detention centers, intended to hold persons prior to the completion of their trials and sentencing, significantly decreased due to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) but was still a problem due to judiciary strikes and a general increase in crime.

Prisoners were not separated by classification of crime or status. A prisoner's wealth often determined cell size, visiting privileges, day-pass eligibility, and place or length of confinement. Inmates reportedly paid fees to prior cell occupants or to prisoners who controlled cellblocks. Although the law permits children up to six years old to live with an incarcerated parent, children as old as 12 lived with their parents in prisons. There were approximately 700 children living with a parent in prison, as an alternative to being left homeless.

The standard prison diet was insufficient, and prisoners who could afford to do so supplemented rations by buying food. On April 8, prisoners rioted in San Pedro prison to demand dietary improvements. In October prisoners around the country went on a hunger strike; their demands centered on modifying counternarcotics legislation, Law 1008, which prohibits prisoners from working and restricts other benefits.

The law provides that prisoners have access to medical assistance, but prisons lacked adequate health care, and it was difficult for prisoners to get permission for outside medical treatment. Of the country's 14 jails, five failed to provide doctors or medical assistance. NGOs and prisoners reported tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in the jails. The government was unaware of the number of ill prisoners. However, affluent prisoners could obtain transfers to preferred prisons or even to outside private institutional care for "medical" reasons. Inmates who could pay had access to drugs and alcohol.

There were separate prisons for women, except for Morros Blancos prison in Tarija, where men and women shared facilities. Conditions for female inmates were similar to those for men; however, overcrowding at the San Sebastian women's prison in Cochabamba was worse than in most prisons for men.

The 706 convicted juvenile (16 to 21 years old) prisoners were not segregated from adult prisoners in jails, and adult inmates sometimes abused them. Rehabilitation programs for juveniles or other prisoners were scarce to nonexistent. Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) visited in November, and its special rapporteur on the rights of persons deprived of liberty reviewed three prisons. The IACHR expressed concern regarding prisoner health and safety as well as overcrowding. The special rapporteur urged the government to take measures to ensure that family cohabitation in prisons conform to international human rights standards, particularly in view of the "precarious state of infrastructure, sanitation, and security in those prisons."

The government permitted prison visits by independent human rights observers, judges, and media representatives, and such visits took place during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention. While the government generally observed these prohibitions, there were high-profile exceptions to this rule.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The National Police have primary responsibility for internal security, but military forces may be called upon for help in critical situations, which

occurred during the year. The National Police disciplined its officers when appropriate, issuing 533 administrative sanctions during the year. Prosecutors generally were reluctant to prosecute security officials for alleged offenses committed while on duty, in part because they relied on the Judicial Technical Police to investigate their own officers.

Arrest and Detention

Arrests were carried out openly, but there were credible reports of high-profile arbitrary arrests and detentions.

The CCP requires an arrest warrant, and the police must inform the prosecutor of an arrest within eight hours. The law requires that a detainee see a judge within 24 hours, during which time the judge must determine the appropriateness of continued pretrial detention or release on bail and must order the detainee's release if the prosecutor fails to show sufficient grounds for arrest. Credible reports indicated that in some cases detainees were held for more than 24 hours without court approval.

The law provides that persons older than 60 are subject to domiciliary detention. However, on April 3, authorities imprisoned 68-year-old Jose Maria Bakovic, former president of the National Roads Agency, for three weeks on corruption charges. On September 1, the prosecution suspended its case against Bakovic in order to obtain additional time for case preparation. Although no formal charges were filed, Bakovic was prohibited from leaving La Paz (see section 1.e.).

On July 28, authorities placed former Central Bank General Manager Marcela Nogales in preventive detention for her alleged role in the improper withdrawal of government funds in 2003. The police failed to present an arrest warrant, a requirement under the law. Subsequently, Nogales was detained for 66 days before being released. Financial audits conducted by a government accounting authority before and after her detention found no evidence of criminal activity but did find administrative irregularities. At year's end the government continued its investigation but had not filed any charges.

On September 8, four Chinese citizens were detained for eight days without charge. In early November the Constitutional Tribunal upheld their right to habeas corpus. The court ordered that the government determine the defendants' immigration status immediately.

Many prisoners awaited trial; as of October over 70 percent of inmates were awaiting sentencing, but the courts provided release on bail for some prisoners. Judges have the authority to order preventive detention for suspects deemed to be a flight risk. If a suspect is not detained, a judge may order significant restrictions on the suspect's movements.

Prisoners were allowed access to lawyers, but approximately 70 percent could not afford legal counsel, and public defenders were overburdened (see section 1.e.).

The government trained 317 police officers in safeguarding human rights during criminal investigations, while 800 police officers and prosecutors were trained in human rights issues in 2005.

Denial of justice through prolonged detention remained a problem. Although the CCP provides that a detainee cannot be held for longer than 18 months awaiting trial and sentencing, this was not respected in practice (see section 1.e.). If the process is not completed in 18 months, the detainee may request release by a judge; however, judicial corruption, a shortage of public defenders, inadequate case-tracking mechanisms, and complex criminal justice procedures kept some persons incarcerated for more than 18 months before trial.

Children from 11 to 16 years of age may be detained indefinitely in children's centers for known or suspected offenses, or for their protection, on the orders of a social worker. There is no judicial review of such orders (see section 5, Children).

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law provides for an independent judiciary, but according to court officials the government attempted to undermine judiciary independence. At a December 20 press conference, the Supreme Court president stated that the government had systematically trampled and subjugated the courts, violating the principle of separation of powers. Corruption and inefficiency in the judicial system remained major problems. The government reduced already low judicial salaries in February, a move which led to the resignation of many senior judges and weakened the judiciary.

President Morales and other high-level government officials publicly commented on their desire to pursue criminal charges against several former government officials.

The government attempted to bring criminal charges against five former presidents for reasons that appeared to be politically motivated. On March 16, the attorney general declared his intent to bring legal proceedings against former presidents Carlos Mesa, Jorge Quiroga, and Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada for signing contracts to sell hydrocarbons to neighboring countries during their respective presidencies. (In October 2004, congress approved criminal charges against Sanchez de Lozada for genocide, murder, and conspiracy in connection with the October 2003 civil unrest.) In August the government announced its intent to reopen a legal case against former president Jaime Paz for narcotics trafficking that was closed in 1996. On August 3, the government completed its investigation of former president Eduardo Rodriguez' responsibility for the transfer of surface-to-air missiles for destruction. At year's end the cases against Quiroga, Paz, Mesa, and Rodriguez were pending the required congressional approval to proceed.

On August 25, the government reopened the prosecution of National Unity party leader and Constituent Assembly delegate, Samuel Doria Medina, on charges that were dismissed 12 years ago. The government initiated this case after Medina's August 7 public statements in

defense of former president Eduardo Rodriguez.

The judicial system has three levels of courts: trial court, superior court, and the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court hears appeals in general. The Constitutional Tribunal is an independent institution and has original and appellate jurisdiction on constitutional matters.

The CCP provides for a system of transparent oral trials in criminal cases, requires that no pretrial detention exceed 18 months, provides for a maximum period of detention of 24 months in cases in which a sentence is being appealed, and mandates a three-year maximum duration for a trial.

The law provides that the prosecutor is in charge of the investigative stage of a case and must give suspects an opportunity to confront charges before a trial formally begins. Former president Rodriguez claimed he did not have an opportunity to confront the charges against him before the government sought congressional approval to levy them. The IACHR, reporting on its November visit, cited "alarming statistics relating to access to justice," noting that only 55 percent of municipalities had any judicial authority and only 23 percent had a prosecutor.

The prosecutor instructs the police regarding witness statements and evidence necessary to prosecute. Counternarcotics prosecutors lead the investigation of narcotics cases. The prosecutor pursues misdemeanor cases (with possible sentences of less than four years) before a judge of instruction and felony cases (with possible sentences of more than four years) before sentencing courts, both of which feature a five-member panel that includes three citizens and two judges. The Forensic Medical Institute opened in 2005, although the attorney general's office did not have the proper chemicals to begin conducting investigations.

Superior court review is restricted to a review of the application of the law. Supreme Court review is restricted to cases involving exceptional circumstances. During superior court and Supreme Court reviews, the courts may confirm, reduce, increase, or annul sentences or provide alternatives not contemplated by lower courts.

Trial Procedures

Defendants have constitutional rights to a presumption of innocence, to a speedy trial, to remain silent, to have an attorney, to confront witnesses, to present evidence on their own behalf, to due process, to an appeal, and to confront legal charges with government prosecutors before a formal court process is initiated. In practice the rights to an attorney and to a speedy trial were not protected systematically, although the CCP facilitated more efficient investigations, transparent oral trials, and credible verdicts.

Budget shortfalls at the National Public Defender Service, established to provide indigent defendants with defense attorneys at public expense, reduced the staff to 54 public defenders, nine legal assistants, and nine district directors. There was a significant shortage of public defenders in rural areas; the IACHR reported that only 3 percent of municipalities had a public defender.

The CCP also recognizes the conflict resolution (community justice) traditions of indigenous communities, provided that the resolution does not conflict with the rights and provisions established under the constitution.

The military justice system generally was susceptible to senior level influence and tended to avoid rulings that would embarrass the military. When a military member is accused of a crime related to his military service, the commander of the affected unit assigns an officer to conduct an inquiry and prepare a report. The results are forwarded to a judicial advisor, usually at the division level, who then recommends a finding of innocence or guilt. For major infractions, the case is forwarded to a military court. Authorities recognized conflicts over military and civilian jurisdiction in certain cases involving human rights. A 2004 constitutional court decision provides that military personnel should be tried in civilian courts for human rights violations. During the year the armed forces organized twelve human rights seminars in different cities and one seminar on the implementation of a consensus document for human rights.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary for civil matters. The law provides for criminal remedies for human rights violations, and at conclusion of a criminal trial, the complainant can initiate a civil trial to seek damages. Administratively, the ombudsman for human rights can issue resolutions on specific human rights cases, which the government may enforce.

f. Arbitrary Interference With Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits such actions, and while the government generally respected these prohibitions, there were credible allegations of security forces making unauthorized entries into private homes in the Chapare and Yungas regions. Residents in the coca growing areas generally were reluctant to file and pursue formal complaints against security forces. Those who were engaged in alternative development activities were also reluctant to pursue formal complaints against coca growers because of fear of reprisals by the coca syndicates.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press. Although the government generally respected these rights in practice, it publicly criticized the press.

The number of media outlets, including printed press, television, and radio was extensive, and a healthy airing of various viewpoints, many expressing opposition to the government, continued. Journalists were poorly trained, and it was common for them to combine news with editorial opinion. While the level of antipress rhetoric by the government and expressions of concern about press freedom by the media and others remained high, the government did not take any legal or administrative actions against the media sector.

Government criticism of the press increased in frequency and tone after President Morales' January inauguration. Some media owners opposed the government's policies and printed biased news stories reflecting their views. The government singled out specific media outlets, particularly those based in the east, and publicly stated its opposition to them. On May 8, the president declared the owner of Unitel, a large media network based in Santa Cruz, an enemy of the government. Then on June 1, President Morales asked Unitel journalists to identify themselves before a large audience of MAS party members before he verbally attacked Unitel. On June 5, presidential security guards assaulted nearly a dozen journalists during a ceremony in Caracallo, Oruro.

On September 20, Vice President Garcia Linera asked media representatives to leave before he gave a private talk to union members from the eastern region. As the journalists attempted to leave, union members beat them with plastic rods. On September 29, the Inter-American Press Association charged that the government was responsible for increased tensions with the press and expressed concern over the president's comments that the majority of media outlets were the primary enemy.

On October 1, the weekly *Juguete Rabioso*, founded by one of President Morales' principal consultants, Walter Chavez, published extensive reports questioning the impartiality of media outlets and accusing them of being part of a conspiracy against the president.

On October 12, the Organization of American States special rapporteur for freedom of expression released its quarterly report citing concerns related to attacks on journalists in the country. On the other hand, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), in its Index of Press Freedom, lauded the country for the level of freedom enjoyed by its journalists. RSF did say, however, that "the growing polarization between state-run and privately owned media and between supporters and opponents of President Morales could complicate the situation." The RSF report covered the 12-month period before September 1. On December 14, RSF issued a release stating its "deep concern" that the media were becoming the leading target for violence between pro- and antigovernment supporters. In addition to citing cases of attacks by progovernment groups, RSF cited the September 8 incendiary bomb attack on the state-run television station in Santa Cruz by several unidentified members of Union Juvenil Cruceñista as an example of attacks by antigovernment groups.

In late November the newspaper *El Nuevo Dia*, with the support of the national press association and human rights groups, filed a complaint against Interior Vice Minister Ruben Gamarra after its journalist Jose Antonio Quisbert was arrested while investigating allegations of corruption in the immigration service.

State-owned and private radio and television stations generally operated freely. However, there were reports that journalists attempting to film or report on events, particularly those involving social movements, were threatened or injured by private individuals or nongovernmental groups critical of their reporting. On October 13, progovernment groups attacked reporters in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. On November 13, 10 police officers assaulted EFE reporter Martin Alipaz while he was trying to cover a protest in Konani. The police also took his camera's memory card.

The law provides that persons found guilty of insulting, defaming, or slandering public officials for carrying out their duties may be jailed from one month to two years. Insults directed against the president, vice president, or a minister increase the sentence by one-half. Journalists accused of violating the constitution or citizens' rights are referred to the 40-person Press Tribunal, an independent body authorized to evaluate journalists' practices. Although cases rarely were brought before the tribunal, it heard one case in 2005 involving a political candidate's defamation claim against a magazine.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chatrooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by electronic mail.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events. Early in the year, government discussions about standardizing the curriculum in private and religious schools were met with extensive public criticism. The government prohibited the importation of pornographic books, magazines, and artwork.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The law provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, and the authorities generally respected this right in practice. While the law requires a permit for most demonstrations, security forces rarely enforced the law, and most protesters demonstrated without obtaining permits,

frequently blockading major thoroughfares and highways.

On June 9, off-duty police officer Santiago Orocando Arevilla was killed during a confrontation with security forces when the government removed 7,000 squatters from private lands in Oruro. Arevilla, who was participating in a protest with a group called the "Roofless Movement," was killed when security forces attempted to disperse the crowd with tear gas. Twelve to 15 others were injured. Although the circumstances of Arevilla's death were unclear, the case remained under investigation (see section 1.a.).

On December 5, MAS followers unsuccessfully attempted to break into a La Paz church where activists were conducting a hunger strike in support of the opposition's calls for a two-thirds vote for all Constituent Assembly decisions. After the government announced it was withdrawing police protection from the church, MAS protesters returned on December 6, broke in, and chased out the hunger strikers. Also on December 6, MAS supporters in the Yungas who opposed the two-thirds requirement kidnapped La Paz prefect Jose Luis Paredes and held him for 10 hours in an unsuccessful effort to force him to support a simple majority vote. Security forces did not intervene.

Freedom of Association

The law provides for freedom of association, and the authorities generally respected this right in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice. Roman Catholicism was predominant, and the constitution recognizes it as the official religion. The Roman Catholic Church received support from the government (approximately 300 priests received small stipends) and exercised a limited degree of political influence. Government officials on occasion criticized the Catholic Church. In response to the church's concerns over proposed education reforms, in July Education Minister Felix Patzi called the church an ally of the oligarchy that had dominated the country for 500 years.

Non-Catholic religious organizations, including missionary groups, must register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship and receive authorization for legal religious representation. There were 622 recognized religious groups on the registry. The ministry is not allowed to deny registration based on an organization's articles of faith, but the process can be time-consuming and expensive, leading some groups to forgo registration and operate informally without certain tax and customs benefits. Most registered religious groups were identified as Protestant or evangelical.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal violence, harassment, or discrimination against members of religious groups during the year. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts. There was a small Jewish community.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2006 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice. However, protesters blocked major highways at various times at different locations throughout the country. Blockades in La Paz, Chuquisaca, and Cochabamba by coca growers, the MAS party, miners, and social groups caused economic losses.

Although the government did not revoke citizenship for political or other reasons, an estimated 792,700 citizens lacked basic identity documents, which prevented them from obtaining international travel documents and other government services.

The law prohibits the forced exile of citizens, and the government did not employ it.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. However, on December 24, the government detained and expressed its intent to deport Cuban dissident Amauri Sanmartino to Cuba for his statements and participation in a violent protest against the government. Although Sanmartino was a Bolivian resident and not a refugee, previous governments had agreed to protect him and not return him to Cuba because of his fear of persecution in that country. By year's end the government agreed to deport Sanmartino to another country.

The government has a system to determine those in need of refugee protection or asylum. The government cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers; however, the government had not yet adjudicated the cases of any of the 22 persons who applied for refugee status in 2004, in part because of bureaucratic delays. During the year 59 persons applied for refugee status, and the government provided refugee protection in 34 of those cases.

There were concerns that the refugee system had become politicized. In May police arrested Angel Acosta and Blas Franco, two

Paraguayan fugitives with Interpol arrest warrants for their involvement in the kidnapping and murder of Cecilia Cubas, but shortly thereafter released them. The two had sought and received protected status, despite the government's knowledge of the Paraguayan arrest warrant. In July after much media attention, the government reversed its position and cancelled their protected status.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law provides citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. However, approximately 400,000 citizens of voting age lacked the identity documents necessary to vote. As of midyear, the Morales government was pursuing an identification card effort, with Venezuelan assistance, with the stated goal of improving people's access to identification documents. Political parties and citizens groups ranging from far left to moderate right functioned openly. Elections for national offices and municipal governments are scheduled to be held every five years.

Elections and Political Participation

On July 2, the country held national elections, which were generally considered free and fair, for the Constituent Assembly. Voter turnout was 83.65 percent.

In national elections held in December 2005, citizens elected Evo Morales Ayma as president in a process generally considered free and fair, despite allegations of minor irregularities in the master voting list. Voter turnout reached a record-breaking 84.5 percent. A 2004 law permitting small citizen and indigenous groups to participate in elections as political parties significantly raised voter participation in the 2005 elections.

Although the law requires that every third candidate appearing on a political party's slate be female, women held only 24 percent of public offices. Female politicians reported that political parties frequently adhered to the quota in submitting their candidate lists but subsequently pressured female candidates to resign their candidacy prior to the election.

Likewise, every other candidate on municipal election ballots must be a woman, a requirement that increased female representation to approximately 30 percent of municipal council positions. There were 23 women among congress' 157 deputies and senators and four women in President Morales' 18-member cabinet. An indigenous woman presided over the Constituent Assembly. Approximately one-half of the cabinet members considered themselves indigenous, and the number of indigenous members of the congress was estimated at 17 percent, a figure difficult to confirm because designation as indigenous is self-declared.

Government Corruption and Transparency

According to the NGO Transparency International, there was a public perception of rampant corruption in the country. The government-prepared National Corruption Index reported that 13 of every 100 public service transactions involved the payment of a bribe costing the country approximately \$115 million (905 million bolivianos) annually. According to this index, corruption disproportionately affected lower-income persons, and the national police, customs, and justice system were rated the most corrupt.

In cases involving allegations of corruption against public officials, congress must give its approval before prosecutors can institute legal proceedings. Authorities alleged that up to 16 former and current congressmen used their influence in the sale of 322 visas to Chinese nationals. On November 1, authorities placed Oscar de la Quintana, the consul in Beijing during the time the visa scandal took place, in preventive detention and charged him with five crimes, including trafficking in persons, improper hiring practices (for hiring three Chinese nationals illegally), and not fulfilling his duties. On November 6, they charged 12 ex-congressmen (all from opposition parties) with influence peddling, while a MAS congressman who was among those requesting the maximum number of suspicious visas was not charged.

On August 28, Jorge Alvarado, director of the state-run oil and natural gas company, resigned in the face of corruption allegations regarding his approval of a contract with Iberoamerica Trading SRL that would have illegally exported petroleum to Brazil. Despite findings of administrative irregularities, the charges against Alvarado were dropped.

In September the press reported that Education Minister Felix Patzi had authorized the purchase of computers in violation of government purchasing rules, but there was no evidence that the case was being prosecuted at year's end.

There was no specific information available on laws providing access to government information or whether the government provided such access in practice.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were cooperative and responsive to their views; however, NGOs and the ombudsman complained that government security forces and ministries occasionally refused to cooperate with their investigations. Security forces continued to provide credible evidence that radical groups used some NGOs as a cover for subversive activities.

The human rights ombudsman is a position with a five-year term established in the constitution. Congress chooses the ombudsman, who is charged with providing oversight for the defense and promotion of human rights, specifically to defend citizens against government abuses. The ombudsman operated without party influence and with adequate resources from the government and foreign NGOs. Indigenous persons

filed most of the complaints received by the ombudsman. The ombudsman issues annual reports, and the government usually accepts his recommendations.

On December 7, members of the Union Juvenil Crucenista, an antigovernment group, attacked the president of the Santa Cruz Human Rights Assembly, a local NGO.

The CCJHR continued to be active in the Chapare region and moved to expand its role as an "Integrated Justice Center" to include conflict resolution. New offices were opened in El Alto and the Yungas. These offices reported their findings to the Vice Ministry of Justice in the Ministry of the Presidency, disseminated human rights information, accepted complaints of abuse, kept records, and referred complaints to the public ministry. The CCJHR also housed a medical forensic expert and an investigative staff to review complaints. The majority of cases received during the year related to interfamilial violence against women and children.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, language, or social status, there was significant discrimination against women, indigenous people, and the small black minority.

Women

Violence against women was a pervasive and underreported problem. According to the Center for the Information and Development of Women (CIDEM), 70 percent of women suffered some form of abuse. CIDEM noted that the statistics "did not reflect the full magnitude of the problem of violence against women" and that "a great number of women" did not report the aggression they faced on a daily basis. The most exhaustive national survey on domestic violence conducted by the National Statistical Institute in 2003 showed 64 percent of women were the target of some form of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse from their partner.

Family laws prohibiting mental, physical, and sexual violence provide for fines or up to four days in jail, unless the case becomes a public crime subject to the Penal Code; however, these laws were enforced irregularly. The government took few meaningful or concrete steps to combat domestic violence. As of November 26, the police Family Protection Brigade had attended to 8,954 cases, as compared to approximately 5,200 in 2005, and 3,640 were cases of repeat offenders. However, most cases of domestic violence went unreported.

Rape also was a serious but underreported problem. The law defines two types of criminal cases. In private criminal matters, the victim brings the case against the defendant; in public criminal matters, a state prosecutor files criminal charges. The CCP makes rape a public crime. The law, as modified during the year, criminalizes statutory rape, with penalties of 10 to 20 years for the rape of a child under the age of 14. In cases involving consensual sex with an adolescent of 14 to 18 years of age, the penalty is two to six years' imprisonment. Forcible rape of an adult is punished by sentences ranging from four to 10 years' imprisonment. Sexual crimes against minors automatically are considered public crimes in which the state presses charges. Spousal rape is not a crime.

Prostitution is legal for adults age 18 and older, and there were reports of trafficking in women for the purposes of prostitution and forced labor (see section 5, Trafficking).

The CCP considers sexual harassment a civil crime. There were no statistics on the incidence of sexual harassment, but it generally was acknowledged to be widespread.

Legal services offices devoted to family and women's rights operated throughout the country. The Maternal and Infant Health Insurance Program provided health services to women of reproductive age and to children under the age of five.

Women were entitled to the same legal rights as men; however, many women were unaware of their legal rights, although the government sponsored seminars to educate them. The Vice Ministry of Women in the Ministry of Sustainable Development protects women's legal rights. Women generally did not enjoy a social status equal to that of men. Traditional prejudices and social conditions remained obstacles to advancement. In rural areas, traditional practices restricting land inheritance for women remained a problem. The minimum wage law treats men and women equally; however, women generally earned less than men for equal work. Women sometimes complained that employers were reluctant to hire them because of the additional costs (mainly maternal) in a woman's benefits package. Working women face discrimination with regard to some benefits: they are not legally entitled to seek insurance coverage for their nonworking husbands, although a married man may obtain insurance coverage for his nonworking spouse. The gender gap in hiring appeared widest in the higher education brackets. Most women in urban areas worked in the informal economy and the services and trade sectors, including domestic service and micro-business, whereas in rural areas the majority of economically active women worked in agriculture. Young girls often left school early to work at home or in the informal economy.

Leading women's rights groups included the Campesinas de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa, which focused on rural indigenous women, and CIDEM.

Children

The government's commitment to children's rights and welfare was insufficient to improve conditions appreciably. There were seven Defender of Children and Adolescents offices to protect children's rights and interests.

Public schooling was provided up to age 17 or eighth grade. The law requires all children to complete at least five years of primary school, and primary education was free and universal. Enforcement of the education law was lax, particularly in rural areas, where more than half of

primary schools offered only three of eight grades. An estimated 50 percent of children completed primary school, and an estimated 26 percent graduated from high school. In October the government announced that it would provide a \$25 (200 bolivianos) subsidy to all primary school students to assist with school-related expenses. There were no significant gender differences in access to basic education, although girls continued to drop out at a higher rate than boys, particularly in rural areas.

Medical care is free up to age five, and there was no apparent difference in access based on gender. Pilot centers offered subsidized health care to children over the age of five, although clinics often were not available in rural areas. Many children, particularly from rural areas, lacked birth certificates and the identity documents necessary to secure social benefits and protection. The government, with help from foreign governments and NGOs, made some progress providing these documents free of charge.

Corporal punishment and verbal abuse were common in schools. Children from 11 to 16 years of age may be detained indefinitely in children's centers for suspected offenses or for their own protection on the orders of a social worker. In 2005 the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that approximately 13,000 children lived in institutions where their basic rights were not respected. There also were many children living on the streets of major cities.

Child prostitution was a problem, particularly in urban areas and in the Chapare region. There were reports of children trafficked for forced labor to neighboring countries (see section 5, Trafficking).

Child labor was a serious problem (see section 6.d.).

Several NGOs had active programs to combat child prostitution. The government's plan to combat child labor included a public information campaign against child prostitution and raids on brothels.

Trafficking in Persons

On January 10, President Rodriguez signed a new law prohibiting trafficking in persons, which specifically criminalizes trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution and provides for prison terms of four to 12 years when the victim is less than 14 years of age. However, there were credible reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country. The government investigated 44 cases of trafficking in persons; while there were some arrests, there were no convictions.

The country is a source for men, women, and children trafficked for forced labor and sexual exploitation to Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Spain, and the United States; however, there were no reliable estimates on the extent of trafficking. Faced with extreme poverty, many citizens became economic migrants, and some were victimized by traffickers as they moved from rural areas to cities and then abroad. Women and children, particularly from indigenous ethnic groups in the Altiplano region, were at greater risk of being trafficked. Children were trafficked within the country to work in prostitution, mines, domestic servitude, and agriculture, particularly on sugarcane and Brazil nut plantations. Weak controls along its extensive borders made the country an easy transit point for illegal migrants, some of whom may have been trafficked. Commercial sexual exploitation of children also remained a problem.

While there were reports that some adolescents were sold into forced labor, it appeared that most victims initially were willing economic migrants who were duped or later coerced into accepting jobs that turned out to be forced labor.

The Ministry of the Presidency, via an inter-institutional committee, has responsibility for trafficking matters. The Ministry of Government, including the National Police and the Immigration Service, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labor, and Sustainable Development, as well as prefectures and municipalities, have secondary responsibility.

Some government officials reportedly took bribes to facilitate smuggling and the illegal movement of people; however, the government did not condone or facilitate trafficking and in 2005 removed at least two high-level immigration officials on suspicion of corruption. It was not known whether any of those dismissed were accused of involvement in trafficking. The government also took measures, such as instituting a system of checks and balances at official border crossings and airports, to reduce corruption among judicial officials responsible for authorizing unaccompanied travel abroad of those under 18 years of age.

In June the prefect of La Paz opened a shelter for abused and exploited children that also provided services for trafficking victims. In November police attended a seminar on trafficking of children and adolescents.

The Defenders of Children offices in municipalities, sometimes in cooperation with NGOs, managed scattered assistance programs for victims.

The NGOs Terre des Hommes, International Organization of Migration, and Save the Children conducted public awareness campaigns on trafficking of children.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and identifies the rights and benefits afforded them. A 1997 decree clarifies these rights and establishes how public and private institutions should integrate persons with disabilities. There was no official discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services. However, societal discrimination kept many persons with disabilities at home from an early age, limiting their integration into society. The Law on Disabilities requires wheelchair access to all public and private buildings, duty-free import of orthopedic devices, a 50 percent reduction in

public transportation fares, and expanded teaching of sign language and Braille.

The electoral law requires accommodation for blind voters; however, in general, there were no special services or infrastructure to accommodate persons with disabilities. A 2003 presidential decree requiring that 4 percent of the government's new hires be persons with disabilities had not been strictly enforced by year's end.

During the year the human rights ombudsman developed a plan to promote integration of persons with disabilities into society, which the government adopted via supreme decree.

The National Committee for Incapacitated Persons was responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There was societal and systemic discrimination against the small black minority, which generally remained at the low end of the socioeconomic scale and faced severe disadvantages in health, life expectancy, education, income, literacy, and employment. The majority of the estimated 35,000 blacks lived in the Yungas region of the Department of La Paz.

Indigenous People

In the 2001 census, approximately 62 percent of the population over 15 years of age identified themselves as indigenous, primarily from the Quechua and Aymara groups. The IACHR reported that approximately 70 percent of these indigenous persons lived in poverty or extreme poverty, with little access to education or to minimal services to support human health, such as clean drinking water and sanitation systems.

Indigenous protesters were major protagonists in the events leading up to the election of the country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales. The Agrarian Reform Law provides for indigenous communities to have legal title to their communal lands and for individual farmers to have title to the land they work. Indigenous people protested the government's failure to provide them with title to all of their claimed territories; they also objected to outside exploitation of their resources. Indigenous peasants illegally occupied several private properties belonging mostly to former government officials, often with the backing of the Landless Movement.

Indigenous groups used the Popular Participation Law to form municipalities that offered them greater opportunities for self determination. Several political parties, citizens' groups, and a number of NGOs were active in promoting the rights of indigenous people, although progress was minimal. The CCP recognized the conflict resolution traditions of indigenous communities (see section 1.e.).

Indigenous people continued to be underrepresented in government and politics, and indigenous groups bore a disproportionate share of poverty and unemployment. In addition, government educational and health services were not available to many indigenous groups living in remote areas (see sections 2.d., 3, and 4).

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

While the law allows workers to form and join trade unions, in practice this right was limited due to inefficient labor courts and inadequate government regulation. Approximately 25 percent of workers in the formal economy, which employed approximately 30 percent of all workers, belonged to unions.

Workers may form a union in any private company of 20 or more employees; however, an estimated 70 percent of workers were employed in small enterprises with fewer than 20 employees. Public sector workers also have the right to form unions. The law requires prior government authorization to establish a union and confirm its elected leadership, permits only one union per enterprise, and allows the government to dissolve unions by administrative fiat.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and requires reinstatement of employees illegally fired for engaging in union activity. The National Labor Court handles complaints of antiunion discrimination, but it can take a year or more to rule due to a significant backlog of cases. The court ruled in favor of discharged workers in some cases and successfully required their reinstatement. However, union leaders stated that problems often were moot by the time the court ruled.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law provides workers the right to organize and bargain collectively; however, collective bargaining, or voluntary direct negotiations between employers and workers without the participation of the government, was limited. Most collective bargaining agreements were restricted to wages.

The law provides most workers with the right to strike but first requires unions to revert to government mediation; the law requires the same of employers before they initiate a lockout.

Public service employees, including banks and public markets, are prohibited from striking; despite this, workers in the public sector

(including teachers, transportation workers, and health care workers) frequently went on strike. Public sector employees had not been penalized for strike activities in recent years. However, in August the government docked teachers' salaries after they went on strike protesting the government's proposed education reform law. Solidarity strikes are illegal, but the government neither prosecuted nor imposed penalties in such cases.

There were numerous strikes organized by a variety of different sectors during the year. Massive strikes and blockades, which included labor movement participation, frequently prevented travel along major routes that connected the largest cities.

There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labor laws in the seven special duty-free zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, the practices of child apprenticeship and agricultural servitude by indigenous workers continued, as did some alleged individual cases of household workers effectively held captive by their employers (see sections 5 and 6.d.).

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated that more than 7,000 Guaranis lived in a type of indentured servitude in extremely remote parts of Chuquisaca. The families worked land owned by landlords in exchange for housing and food but were not paid the minimum wage. As a result, they incurred large debts to their landlords and were not permitted to leave the property without satisfying their debt. These families lived in very poor conditions, without water, electricity, medical care, or schools. The human rights ombudsman conducted an investigation into this situation and in November 2005 released a formal proclamation urging regional and national governments to address the problem. During the year the Ministry of Justice began negotiations with ranch owners to normalize working conditions and obtain unpaid wages. On November 6, eight Guarani families received the first settlement of \$2,875 (23,000 bolivianos) and divided it among themselves.

In 2005 the ILO reported that between 26,000 and 30,000 persons, mostly of indigenous origin, were victims of forced labor, harvesting Brazil nuts in Beni Department. The work was seasonal, lasting approximately three months per year. During that time landlords sold basic foodstuffs to workers at inflated prices; workers subsequently incurred large debts and were not permitted to leave the property until the debts were satisfied. Similar conditions existed in the sugar industry in Santa Cruz Department.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

Child labor was a serious problem. The law prohibits all work for payment by children under the age of 14; however, in practice, the Ministry of Labor generally did not enforce child labor laws, including those pertaining to the minimum age and maximum hours for child workers, school completion requirements, and health and safety conditions for children in the workplace. The law prohibits a range of dangerous, immoral, and unhealthy work for minors under the age of 18. Labor law permits apprenticeship for 12- to 14-year-olds under various formal but poorly enforced restrictions, which have been criticized by the ILO and were considered by some to be tantamount to bondage (see section 6.c.).

The Ministry of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor provisions but did not enforce them throughout the country.

According to government and UNICEF statistics, approximately 800,000 children and adolescents between the ages of seven and 19 were engaged in some type of work, which represented an estimated 32 percent of this age group. Although the law prohibits persons under 18 years of age from work in the sugarcane fields, approximately 10,000 rural migrant children (7,000 of whom were under the age of 14) worked in this activity. Urban children sold goods, shined shoes, and assisted transport operators. Rural children often worked with parents from an early age, generally in subsistence agriculture. Children generally were not employed in factories or formal businesses but, when employed, often worked the same hours as adults. Children also worked in mines and other dangerous occupations in the informal sector. Narcotics traffickers used children to transport drugs. Child prostitution remained a problem (see section 5).

The traditional practice of criadito service persisted in some parts of the country. Criaditos are indigenous children of both sexes, usually 10- to 12-year-olds, whom their parents indenture to middle- and upper-class families to perform household work in exchange for education, clothing, room, and board. Such work is illegal, and there were no controls over the benefits to, or treatment of, such children.

The government devoted minimal resources to investigating child labor cases, but NGOs and international organizations such as UNICEF supplemented the government's efforts.

The government continued its efforts to eliminate child labor in its worst forms, working with NGOs to discourage the use of child labor in the mining and sugar sectors by participating in internationally funded programs to provide educational alternatives to children who otherwise would work in mines or sugarcane fields.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The government established the minimum wage for the public and private sectors by supreme decree following traditional negotiation with the Central Bolivian Workers Union. The national minimum wage was \$55 (436 bolivianos) per month and did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Most formal sector workers earned more, although many informal sector workers earned less. While the minimum wage fell below prevailing wages in most jobs, certain benefit calculations were pegged to it. The minimum wage did not cover the large number of workers in the informal sector.

Labor laws establish a maximum workweek of 48 hours, limit women to a workday one hour shorter than that of men, prohibit women from working at night, mandate rest periods, and require premium pay for work above a standard workweek. In practice the government did not effectively enforce these laws.

The Ministry of Labor's Bureau of Occupational Safety has responsibility for protection of workers' health and safety, but relevant standards were enforced poorly. There were fewer than 30 inspectors throughout the entire country. While the government did not maintain official statistics, there were reports that workers died due to unsafe conditions, particularly in the mining and construction sectors. A national tripartite committee of business, labor, and government representatives was responsible for monitoring and improving occupational safety and health standards. The Ministry of Labor maintained a hot line for worker inquiries, complaints, and reports of unfair labor practices and unsafe working conditions.

Working conditions in cooperative-operated mines remained poor. Miners continued to work long days in dangerous, unhealthy conditions and earned relatively little for their efforts; some earned less than \$2.75 (21 bolivianos) per 12-hour day. Conditions changed little in the past decades, as independent miners' cooperatives lacked the financial and technical resources needed to improve mines' infrastructure. Miners in such cooperatives worked in dangerous, unhealthy conditions with no scheduled rest for long periods. The law provides workers the right to remove themselves from dangerous situations without fear of losing their jobs.