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Bolivia: The national authorities must maintain order and protect inhabitants

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The national authorities in Bolivia must provide viable solutions under the rule of law to avoid more bloodshed, Amnesty International said today.

On 11 January at least two people were killed and over 100 injured in Cochabamba, Cochabamba Department, following clashes between groups supporting the governing party MAS, who are calling for the resignation of the Prefect of Cochabamba, and groups supporting the Prefect and calls for regional autonomy.

The protests, which started on 8 January, had already resulted in injuries to over 20 people, including journalists who were covering the event.

“The national government has an obligation and a duty to maintain order and must ensure that its security forces operate within a framework of full respect for human rights. Otherwise, there is a risk that the situation will deteriorate even further” Amnesty International said.

It is not the first time that violence has erupted during the crisis currently facing Bolivia. In December 2006 there were violent clashes in Santa Cruz Province, also between groups supporting MAS and those opposing it.

Amnesty International is calling on the Bolivian authorities to investigate the incidents that took place on 8 and 11 January in Cochabamba and the events in Santa Cruz last December and to come up with long-term viable solutions.

The organization is also appealing to regional and social leaders, political parties and all groups who have chosen confrontation to stop using violence or any method of protest that puts people’s physical safety at risk and enter into a productive dialogue.

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