



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

BOLIVIA

10 SEPTEMBER 2008

Contents

	Page
1. PREFACE	3
2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BOLIVIA.....	5
Geography	5
Map	6
Recent history	6
Recent events and political developments.....	7
Economy	8
Human Rights	9
3. INDEX TO KEY SOURCE DOCUMENTS	11
Key facts and geography.....	11
Map	11
History	11
Politics and recent developments	11
Human Rights – general	12
Human Rights – specific issues	13
Abuses by non-government armed forces.....	13
Arrest and detention – legal rights	13
Children	13
Citizenship and Nationality	14
Corruption	14
Death Penalty	14
Disability	14
Employment rights	14
Ethnic groups.....	14
Foreign refugees.....	15
Freedom of movement.....	15
Freedom of religion.....	15
Freedom of speech and media	15
Human Rights institutions, organisations and activists	16
Humanitarian issues	16
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	16
Judiciary.....	16
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons	17
Medical issues	17
Military service	17
Political affiliation	17
Prison conditions	18
Security forces	18
Security situation	18
Trafficking	18
Women	18
4. REFERENCES TO SOURCE MATERIAL	20

1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Bolivia has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 10 September 2008. It was issued on 10 September 2008.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Bolivia is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

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ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- vii The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UK Border Agency's country of origin information material. The APCI welcomes all feedback on UKBA's COI Key Documents, COI Reports and other country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk

- viii In the course of its work, the APCI reviews the content of selected UKBA COI documents and makes recommendations specific to those documents and of a more general nature. The APCI may or may not have reviewed this particular document. At the following link is a list of the COI Key Documents, COI Reports and other documents which have, to date, been reviewed by the APCI: www.apci.org.uk/reviewed-documents.html
- ix Please note: It is not the function of the APCI to endorse any UKBA material or procedures. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

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[Return to Contents](#)

1. Background information on Bolivia

Full Country Name: Bolivia

Area: 1.28 million sq km (425,000 sq miles)

Population: 9,119,152 (July 2007 est.) (USSD, May 2008) [2c]

Constitutional Capital: Sucre (population: 292,080 (2004 estimate)) (USSD, May 2008) [2c]

Administrative Capital: La Paz (population 800,385 (2004 est.)) (USSD, May 2008) [2c]

People: Indigenous, primarily Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani (65%), Mestizo (35%)

Languages: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara (all official) plus numerous other indigenous languages

Religion(s): Roman Catholic (95%), Protestant (Evangelical Methodist)

Currency: Boliviano

Major Political Parties: Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS); PODEMOS (Poder Democrático Social)

Government: Democracy with elections held every 5 years. The 1964 constitution (revised in 1994 and 2004) provides for an executive and a legislature consisting of a 27-member Senate and 130-member Chamber of Deputies.

Head of State: Juan Evo Morales Aima

Foreign Minister: David Choquehuanca

Membership of International Groupings/Organisations: Bolivia holds membership of the UN; WTO; G-11; G77; Organisation of American States (OAS); Andean Community (CAN); Latin American Integration Association (ALADI); Rio Group; MERCOSUR (associate membership); Inter-American Developmental Bank (IADB); IMF. (All from FCO Country Profile, 28 January 2008, except information about the two capitals and population) [4]

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile on Bolivia, updated 28 January 2008, noted:

“Bolivia is land-locked in Central South America, bordered by Peru (900km) and Chile (861km) to the west, Brazil (3,400km) to the north and east and Paraguay (750km) and Argentina (832km) to the south. Straddled by the Andes, it is a land of gaunt mountains, cold desolate plateaux and semi-tropical lowlands in an area the size of Spain and France together. Bolivia shares control of Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable lake (elevation 3,805m), with Peru. Sucre, in the south of the country, is the legal capital. The political capital and centre of government is La Paz, situated to the west, which at 3,640m is the highest capital city in the world.” [4]

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

MAP



[19] United Nations Cartographic Section, Map of Bolivia
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/bolivia.pdf>

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

RECENT HISTORY

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2008 Country Report on Bolivia (Freedom House Report 2008), released 2 July 2008, stated that “After achieving independence from Spain in 1825, the Republic of Bolivia endured recurrent instability and military rule. However, the armed forces, responsible for more than 180 coups in 157 years,

have refrained from political intervention since 1982, making 2007 the 25th anniversary of Bolivia's return to democracy." [1a]

Freedom House further noted:

"In 1993, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, a wealthy U.S.-educated businessman, was elected president. During his first term in office, he initiated a sweeping privatization program and stepped up eradication of the country's illegal coca production, measures that provoked widespread public protests and a decline in his popularity. Former dictator turned democrat Hugo Banzer Suarez succeeded Sanchez de Lozada following the 1997 presidential election, but the terminally ill Banzer resigned in 2001, and reformist vice president Jorge Quiroga finished the remaining year of Banzer's term."

"No candidate in the June 2002 presidential election won a majority of the popular vote, and under Bolivia's constitution, members of the National Congress were tasked with deciding the outcome of the election. They selected Sanchez de Lozada, who had received a small plurality of votes, over Evo Morales, a radical indigenous leader of the country's coca growers. Morales's Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party nonetheless won 10 seats in the upper house and 59 in the lower chamber in the concurrent congressional elections. [1a]

The Freedom House Report 2008 continued that

"In 2003, Bolivian indigenous groups, workers, students, and coca growers rebelled against the planned construction of a \$5 billion pipeline for the export of Bolivian natural gas via longtime rival Chile to the United States and Mexico. The mass protests against Sanchez de Lozada were aggravated by resentment over the failure of nearly two decades of democratic reform and economic restructuring to improve the lot of the indigenous majority in a country where 64 percent of the population lived in poverty. Sanchez de Lozada responded by ordering harsh repression of the protests, leading to demands for his resignation. In October, after less than 15 months in office and at least 120 deaths stemming from the crackdown, Sanchez de Lozada resigned and fled to the United States." [1a]

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The BBC News Country Profile for Bolivia, updated 22 April 2008, noted that:

"Socialist leader Evo Morales, a figurehead for Bolivia's coca farmers, won presidential elections in December 2005, the first indigenous Bolivian to do so... His victory was decisive; he surpassed the figure needed to take office without the need for a vote in Congress. Much of his support came from Bolivia's indigenous majority... In December 2007 Mr Morales formally received the new draft constitution, which he says will give more powers to Bolivia's indigenous majority. But there have been street demonstrations and four of the country's wealthiest regions have declared autonomy in protest. The draft document now has to get through two referendums." [7a]

In March 2008 the National Electoral Court announced that the referendum on the new draft constitution planned to take place on 5 May 2008 could not go ahead as "[n]o technical, operative, legal or political conditions exist to allow it to go forward". The

Court also delayed referendums to be held by four eastern states that wanted greater autonomy from central government. (BBC News, 8 March 2008) [7c] On 5 May 2008 it was reported that the resource rich state of Santa Cruz had conducted an unofficial referendum seeking greater autonomy, pitting “the region's mixed-race elite against the president's indigenous supporters” with voters choosing that the state has more control over its resources. However President Morales rejected the vote as illegal. (BBC News, 5 May 2008) [7d]

On 8 May 2008 the Bolivian parliament passed a bill which required that the mandates of the president, vice-president and regional governors be put to vote within 90 days. The President, Mr Morales, subsequently announced 10 August 2008 as the date for the recall referendum. (BBC News, 12 May 2008) [7e] On 10 August Mr Morales received the required number of votes to retain his presidency and subsequently announced 7 December 2008 as the referendum date on the draft constitution, which advanced his socialist policies. However the move was opposed by the right-wing governors of five regions, who were demanding greater autonomy for their states. (BBC News, 29 August 2008) [7f] On 2 September 2008, Reuters UK reported that Bolivia's electoral court ruled the referendum could not take place because President Morales had called for the vote by presidential decree rather than by law. Mr Morales rejected the court's decision and vowed to go ahead with the ballot as planned, stating that their announcement was “political, without legal basis” and “against the wishes of the Bolivian people.” [31]

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

ECONOMY

GDP: \$10.33 bn (2006)

GDP per head: approx US\$1,102 (2006)

Annual Growth: 4.8% (2007)

Inflation: 11.7% (2007)

Unemployment: 9% (2007 – estimate)

Major Industries: Natural gas, mining and agriculture

Major trading partners: United States, Japan, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Argentina, EU (FCO Country Profile, 28 January 2008) [4]

Exchange rate: £1 = 13.12 Bolivian Bolivianos (BOB) US\$1 = 6.99 BOB (XE.com, accessed 14 August 2008) [23]

On the economy of Bolivia, the FCO Country Profile, dated 28 January 2008, stated:

“Bolivia is one of the poorest and least developed Latin American countries. About two thirds of the 9 million population live in poverty, with one third in extreme poverty (less than \$1 per day). In a May 2005 survey two thirds of Bolivians said they would emigrate if given the opportunity. Paradoxically, Bolivia is rich in natural gas and minerals, and in agricultural potential. Bolivian macroeconomic figures are strong, with foreign reserves at record levels, and a healthy balance of payments surplus. GDP growth was 4.8% in 2007, and the foreign debt/GDP ratio is down to 32%. However, these figures have not generated much confidence in the economy. Domestic and foreign investment levels are both low, and there is a worry that the economy is too dependent on primary commodity prices. Although Bolivia's income from the mining sector has increased, production has fallen.

“The government has followed a policy of taking control of the natural resources back into State control. On 1 May 2006, President Morales announced the nationalisation of the hydrocarbons industry: as a result the foreign companies have signed new contracts with the government, giving the government company YPFB control of the resources and increasing the tax take. The Bolivian Government has signed major contracts with the Argentine Government, including for a gas pipeline to Northern Argentina. However, the lack of large investments in the sector has raised question marks over Bolivia’s supply capability.” [4]

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS

The US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007 stated that in Bolivia:

“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, and press freedom; 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.” [2a]

Amnesty International’s (AI) 2008 Annual Report, covering events from January – December 2007, expressed particular concern in Bolivia over freedom of expression and attacks on journalists, and political violence. [11a]

The Freedom House Report 2008 stated that “Regional and ethnic friction remained high in 2007. Violence in Cochabamba in January caused three deaths and scores of injuries, while confrontations in other areas throughout the year left dozens wounded. Radicals on both sides even spoke of civil war – though this was at no point imminent – and large demonstrations were held in both pro-government and opposition-dominated cities.” [1a]

The same source reporting on political and civil rights generally noted that Bolivia is:

- An electoral democracy, and presidential and constitutional elections held in 2005 and 2006 were generally free and fair. Bolivians are able to form their own political parties;
- Corruption and nepotism remained a problem, though the Government had taken steps to address this;
- Freedom of expression was guaranteed in law but in practice there were limitations. The Government respected academic freedom;
- Freedom of religion was guaranteed in law;
- The “law provides for the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, although social protests often turn violent”;
- The judiciary was “corrupt, inefficient and inaccessible to many Bolivians” though the Government had “made serious efforts to improve the administration of justice”;
- Freedom of movement was enshrined in law and generally respected in practice; and

- Women's rights were "problematic". Women's political representation had increased but violence against women was widespread. They did not have the same social status of men and the judiciary was ineffective at safeguarding their rights. [1a]

[Return to Contents](#)
[Go to list of sources](#)

3. Index to key source documents

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Bolivia, last updated May 2008 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35751.htm
	[4]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Bolivia, last updated on 28 January 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/south-america/bolivia?profile=all
	[7a]	BBC News Country Profile: Bolivia, last updated 22 April 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1210487.stm
	[10]	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook Bolivia, last updated 15 July 2008 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html
MAP	[19]	United Nations Cartographic Section, Map of Bolivia. http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/bolivia.pdf
HISTORY	[1a]	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Bolivia, last updated May 2008 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35751.htm
	[4]	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Bolivia, last updated on 28 January 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/south-america/bolivia?profile=all
	[7a]	BBC News Country Profile: Bolivia, last updated 22 April 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1210487.stm
	[7b]	BBC Timeline: Bolivia, last updated 26 May 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1218814.stm
POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS	[1a]	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356
	[1c]	Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm

<p>POLITICS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS CONT'D</p>	<p>[2c] [4] [7a] [7b] [7c] [7d] [7e] [7f] [8] [11a] [16b] [31]</p>	<p>United States Department of State, Background Note: Bolivia, last updated May 2008 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35751.htm</p> <p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Bolivia, last updated on 28 January 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/south-america/bolivia?profile=all</p> <p>BBC News Country Profile: Bolivia, last updated 22 April 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1210487.stm</p> <p>BBC Timeline: Bolivia, last updated 26 May 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1218814.stm</p> <p>BBC News, Setback to Bolivian reform plan, 8 March 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7284765.stm</p> <p>BBC News, Morales dismisses autonomy vote, 5 May 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7382538.stm</p> <p>BBC News, Morales sets Bolivia recall date, 12 May 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7396809.stm</p> <p>BBC News, Bolivia sets date for referendum, 29 August 2008 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7587544.stm</p> <p>International Federation for Human Rights Steadfast in Protest, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders Annual Report 2007 – Bolivia (page 108), 19 June 2008 http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/report2007obs_eng.pdf</p> <p>Amnesty International Human Rights Report 2008: Bolivia, Covering events from January to December 2007 http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/regions/americas/bolivia</p> <p>International Crisis Group, Bolivia: Rescuing the New Constitution and Democratic Stability, 19 June 2008 http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5499&l=1</p> <p>Reuters UK, Bolivia vows to press on with constitution vote, 2 September 2008 http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKN0243625520080902?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0</p>
<p>HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL</p>	<p>[1a] [1c] [2a] [4]</p>	<p>Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356</p> <p>Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151</p> <p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p> <p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: Bolivia,</p>

HUMAN RIGHTS – GENERAL CONT'D		<p>last updated on 28 January 2008 http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/south-america/bolivia?profile=all</p> <p>[11a] Amnesty International Human Rights Report 2008: Bolivia, Covering events from January to December 2007 http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/regions/americas/bolivia</p> <p>[16a] International Crisis Group, Bolivia profile, undated http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4663&l=1</p> <p>[26] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Annual Report 2007: Lima (regional) covering Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/7EUF2K\$FILE/icrc_ar_07_lima.pdf?OpenElement</p>
<p>HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:</p> <p>(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)</p>		
ABUSES BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ARMED FORCES	[2a]	<p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p>
ARREST AND DETENTION – LEGAL RIGHTS	[2a]	<p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p>
CHILDREN	<p>[1a]</p> <p>[2a]</p> <p>[2d]</p> <p>[11a]</p> <p>[12b]</p> <p>[15]</p> <p>[28]</p>	<p>Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356</p> <p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p> <p>United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, 4 June 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/105387.htm</p> <p>Amnesty International Human Rights Report 2008: Bolivia, Covering events from January to December 2007 http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/regions/americas/bolivia</p> <p>OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of Reports submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention, 11 February 2005 http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/898586b1dc7b4043c1256a450044f331/27bf973d7b8faa23c125702f0033c5ee/\$FILE/G0541033.doc</p> <p>Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Global Report 2008: Bolivia http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports?root_id=159&directory_id=216</p> <p>The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Bolivia,</p>

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	[1c]	Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151
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	[20]	Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2007 http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007
DEATH PENALTY	[11c]	Amnesty International, Abolitionist and Retentionist countries, accessed 14 August 2008 http://www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty/abolitionist-and-retentionist-countries#ordinary
DISABILITY	[1c]	Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm
EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS	[1c]	Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm
ETHNIC GROUPS	[1a]	Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356
	[1c]	Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151
	[2a]	United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm
	[2c]	United States Department of State, Background Note: Bolivia, last updated May 2008 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35751.htm
	[5]	Minority Rights Group International

ETHNIC GROUPS CONT'D		<p>Bolivia Overview, undated http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=2410</p> <p>[8] International Federation for Human Rights Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders Annual Report 2007 – Bolivia (page 108), 19 June 2008 http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/report2007obs_eng.pdf</p> <p>[10] Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook Bolivia, last updated 15 July 2008 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html</p> <p>[17a] Minorities at Risk, Assessment for Indigenous Highland Peoples in Bolivia, undated http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupid=14501</p> <p>[17b] Minorities at Risk, Assessment for Lowland Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia, undated http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupid=14502</p>
FOREIGN REFUGEES	<p>[2a]</p> <p>[6]</p>	<p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p> <p>UNHCR, Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP), 28 February 2008 http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PROTECTION/47e12c502.pdf</p>
FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT	<p>[1a]</p> <p>[2a]</p>	<p>Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356</p> <p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p>
FREEDOM OF RELIGION	<p>[1a]</p> <p>[1c]</p> <p>[2a]</p> <p>[2b]</p>	<p>Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356</p> <p>Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads 2007: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=8&ccrpage=37&ccrcountry=151</p> <p>United States Department of State, Report on Human Rights Practices – 2007: Bolivia, 11 March 2008 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100629.htm</p> <p>United States Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Bolivia http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90243.htm</p>
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	<p>[1a]</p> <p>[1b]</p>	<p>Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008: Bolivia http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7356</p> <p>Freedom of the Press 2008 Draft Country Report: Bolivia,</p>

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Return to Contents
Go to list of sources

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