We call for the immediate release of the political prisoner and Afrobolivian leader, Irene Elena Flores Torrez

Elena Flores, the elected union president of Adepcoca (the Departmental Association of Coca Producers) and the beloved eldest sibling in her family, has been harassed and jailed without cause by the racist, misogynist and anti-labour coup regime of Jeanine Añez.

She has been imprisoned for more than a month under deplorable conditions. The regime has subjected her to a smear campaign with continued threats of violence.

The de facto government is responsible for stealing a presidential election and ordering 36 deaths and at least 890 illegal detentions. They have carried out forced disappearances, rape by military and police, and three massacres in Sacaba, Senkata, and Ovejuyo. The Añez government censures media, attacks and tortures journalists, and celebrates the violence of white supremacists who are granted immunity from prosecution.

In the Yungas where the majority of Afrobolivians live, US interventionism disguised as anti-narcotics, together with illegal gold mining operations, has sown paramilitary violence.

Who is Elena Flores?
Elena Flores is a highly respected Afrobolivian and union leader. She began union work in her youth, carrying out many leadership roles in the Association of 35,000 coca leaf farmers of the Yungas, 5,000 feet below the city of La Paz. Flores says she always dreamed of leading the Association, which since 1983 had been led only by men. When she was elected in August last year, she won on a platform of ousting paramilitaries and uniting the three regions of the Inquisivi and the North and South Yungas. She is a strong labour leader and profoundly dedicated to the wellbeing of women.

Flores is the eldest of four siblings. They care for her elderly mother who is unwell and a brother has a severe disability. She would of course want to be protecting her family during the dangerous times of the coup regime and the coronavirus pandemic. She denounced the criminality of the former union leadership, who are trained in paramilitary tactics and bankrolled by the Bolivian right and the U.S. The former union leaders refused to leave office or hold elections. They created cocaine networks, and ran vast corruption schemes using the considerable income of the union.

More recently, Flores’ enemies have served as paramilitaries under the direction of the army and police of the Añez regime. They enter the city of La Paz as one contingent of the right-wing "shock groups" and "pititas", made up of mobs of conservative neighbors. Añez calls them heroes and has taken smiling photos with them.

Since the coup, Flores has been at the forefront of denouncing the Añez regime's militarisation, harsh repression and disregard for democracy. She vows to protect and unify her unionised, campesino, Indigenous and Afrobolivian region.

The current situation of women political prisoners
Since March 4th Elena Flores has been imprisoned at the Centro de Orientación Femenino de Obrajes or Centre for Women's Guidance.

María Eugenia Choque Quispe is also detained there, the 60-year-old president of the Supreme Electoral Board who was falsely accused by the coup regime of committing fraud (she is also a social worker and professor of Indigenous women's histories).

Another Indigenous woman in that prison is Patricia Hermosa, a lawyer and notary for Evo Morales. Hermosa has been imprisoned ever since she tried to file the formal papers for Evo’s candidacy for the Senate. His candidacy is entirely legal but has been blocked by the de facto government.

Numerous other political prisoners have been jailed since the November 10th coup that brought to power Jeanine Añez.

**The so-called crimes of Elena Flores**
Flores led a takeover of a Health Centre, el Centro de Especialidades de Atención Integral, which rightfully belongs to the union of which Elena Flores is the elected president.

The clinic had fallen under right-wing paramilitary control thanks to the previous union leader, Franklin Gutierrez. He installed corrupt networks and refused to hold elections, in complete contempt of Adepcoca's governing statutes.

Elena Flores has been targeted by the regime because she is a Black woman leader, a key union organiser, and an elected leader in the coca growing region. She appeared at the side of Evo Morales repeatedly during the months leading up to October elections. The Yungas has always been a strong base of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS).

**The coup government’s false charges**
The regime's court imprisoned Elena Flores for aggravated robbery, harming public property, forced entry, and preventing the State from exercising its services.

They charge her for an offense they allege took place in July, 2019. More than six months later, the coup regime filed against her. Strangely, the legal team presented photographs taken in November as evidence, and the coup judge accepted them. Flores' lawyer argues that she was not given adequate notice of these charges and has been denied due process.

**The coup regime**
The coup regime was launched by the United States, working with racist oligarchs and Luis Almagro's Organization of American States (OAS). They aim to protect multinational business interests and return the country to neoliberalism, racism and general misery.

The civilian shock groups who built a climate of chaos for years before the coup, in 2019 attacked Indigenous women and cut off their braids, likewise tearing at Afrobolivian women’s afros.
In the months following the coup, the de facto government has institutionalized their hatred of women by dismantling social programmes that were destined to young mothers. They have destroyed public health care that in the last 14 years had tremendously decreased infant and maternal mortality.

Within days of the coup, Añez made evident her misogynist goals through systematic rape of women and girls by the security forces, including after they had murdered them.

The Añez regime must release Elena Flores. She must return to her family, community, region and union work. Her people have been robbed of her leadership.

For further reference
- https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/02/the-oas-has-to-answer-for-its-role-in-the-bolivian-coup

We call for all the de facto government's charges against Elena Flores to be dropped immediately and for Flores, Choque, Hermosa, and all political prisoners to be released.

In solidarity,

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HAITI and THE CARIBBEAN
Haiti Action Committee
Jamaica Peace Council
Oilfields Workers' Trade Union, San Fernando, Trinidad & Tobago
Movement for Social Justice, San Fernando, Trinidad & Tobago
Assembly of Caribbean People, Trinidad and Tobago Chapter

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