



## **Kashmir Blockade: Does India deny basic freedoms? The | Bharatiya Janata Party**

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In this episode of *In the front*, we ask Gaurav Bhatia, national spokesman for BJP, if human rights are denied in Kashmir administered by India.

And in the *Sand* We discussed the political turmoil in Bolivia after the resignation of President Evo Morales and asked, was it a coup d'etat?

### **Will the Indian confinement in Kashmir ever end?**

Tensions in Kashmir administered by India remain high since the government stripped the region of its semi-autonomous status in August and locked it up. Tens of thousands of soldiers were sent to the region, Internet and telephones were cut, and the curfew was imposed.

Critics have wondered if the eight million residents of the Muslim-majority region are denied basic human rights, and if behind the repression there is a Hindu nationalist ideology led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Gaurav Bhatia, national spokesman for the BJP, says there is broad support in India for the change of Kashmir status.

"The entire nation has applauded the historic decision made by (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi," he said.

According to Bhatia, the restrictions imposed on people are made in accordance with Indian law and are only temporary to ensure safety. "The life of a citizen is definitely much more important than civil liberties," he said.

Human rights groups say thousands of people have been arrested and detained in Kashmir since August, most without charges. When asked about Mehbooba Mufti, one of the three prime ministers arrested, Bhatia said that Mufti's arrest was due to a "highly inflammatory,quot; statement that prompted the violence.

He said arrests like hers are legal and are "for the good of the country and the state."

Bhatia also praised a Supreme Court ruling that allowed the construction of a Hindu temple at a site claimed by Hindus and Muslims in the city of Ayodhya.

At the center of the bitter dispute is the 16th-century Babri mosque, which was torn down by Hindu crowds in 1992, which caused riots that killed nearly 2,000 people.

The uncompromising majority of India's Hindus believe that Lord Ram, the warrior god, was born at the site where the Babri mosque existed.

Bhatia, who is also a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India, said the verdict "completes justice for all parties."

"I think it was encouraging to see that members of the Muslim community were also given justice and also provided an alternative five-acre site."

This week's leader is the national spokesman for the BJP government of India, Gaurav Bhatia.

### **Is Evo Morales from Bolivia the victim of a coup?**

Evo Morales made history in Bolivia when he became the country's first indigenous president in 2006. He was very popular and introduced radical social reforms and economic growth.

But it all ended for the 60-year-old man this week when he resigned and fled to Mexico, after weeks of protests and a request from the army to resign.

Morales and his supporters say he was the victim of a coup d'etat. Critics say he was expelled by his own people due to a fraudulent election.

Ian Vásquez, an expert in Latin America at the Cato Institute, is convinced that it was not a coup d'etat.

"This is the story of an authoritarian regime that the people in Bolivia got sick and did what they could to recover their democracy," said Vasquez.

Mark Weisbrot, co-director of the Center for Economic and Political Research studying Bolivia, says Morales was clearly the victim of a coup d'état because he was a democratically elected president whom the army asked him to resign.

At the center of the debate are the October elections. The Organization of American States (OAS), which had observers in the field, expressed concern about irregularities, manipulation and security breaches. That includes a pause of almost 24 hours in the results, which ends with a wave of votes for Morales, enough to avoid a second round of elections.

Weisbrot rejects the claims that the election was fraudulent. He says that the results of the pro-Morales regions simply took longer to arrive than other areas. It also casts doubt on the OAS, saying they are not neutral actors.

"I think the OAS deliberately misrepresented it because they said it three times, they never offered any evidence of that story," Weisbrot said.

This week *SandWe* discussed the political crisis that led the president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, to resign.