

Explanations for the punitive turn of crime policy in Bolivia, 2006-2016

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In the last decade, Bolivia, as with most countries in the region, has seen an unprecedented increase of its prison population. This is often explained as the consequence of a punitive populism sweeping Latin America. Our article investigates what triggered this punitive turn in Bolivia by identifying some of the factors that impact crime policy and growing prison populations since the election of president Evo Morales in 2006. We argue that a complex array of local and international factors and shifts in crime policy to harden approaches to domestic violence led to steep increases in remand populations. Combined with other inefficiencies in the criminal justice system, this led to sustained increases in the prison population throughout most of this period. This study is based on new and previously unstudied statistical data produced by the Bolivian institutions in charge of implementing crime policy. © The Author(s) 2018.

Bolivia

Criminal policy

Penal populism

Prison population

Punitive turn