

Former Brazillian President to Stand Trial for Coup Charges



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After a unanimous Supreme Court vote, former Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro will stand trial on charges of attempting a coup against current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Details. Bolsonaro, a former army captain, will stand trial after evidence emerged linking him and seven co-conspirators to a plot to incite supporters and stage a coup d'état.

► The co-conspirators include various heads of the government's intelligence, security and military services.

► If found guilty, Bolsonaro could face up to 40 years in prison and would be barred from running in the next election.

Context. On 8 January 2023, Bolsonaro's supporters stormed Brazilian government buildings in protest at Lula's victory in the previous year's divisive elections - Lula won the 2022 elections with 50.9% to Bolsonaro's 49.1%.

► Evidence suggests that Bolsonaro and his allies were considering a coup even before the elections. A leaked 2022 video shows them meeting to discuss possible plans, and documents have been found discussing the kidnapping or assassination of Supreme Court Minister Alexandre de Moraes, Lula and Vice President Geraldo Alckmin.

► Lula's popularity has fallen, with 44% of Brazilians saying they think his government is worse than Bolsonaro's and 22% saying they see no difference, compared to the 32% who say it is better.

Important to know. Despite Lula's rhetoric about defending democracy, in reality, he only represents a section of the capitalist class that prefers to rule under "normal conditions" through liberal democracy, as opposed to the more brazen methods employed by Bolsonaro, his allies and other far-right figures abroad such as Trump.

► Bolsonaro's attempted coup was a symptom of a world divided into different spheres of influence. If he'd succeeded, Brazil would have been much more closely aligned with US imperialism in opposition to rising Chinese imperialism. Lula's presidency represents the section of the capitalists who defend close relations with the BRICS+ — China is already Brazil's largest trading partner.

► The speeches against the far-right also serve to distract workers from their difficult living conditions. Although poverty is officially at an all-time low (still a staggering 27.4% of the population), inflation continues to make life difficult, as do austerity measures, long working hours and exploitative work — notably, workers have been campaigning for a reduction in the working week.

► This trial against Bolsonaro might be able to stop him as an individual, but it cannot defeat the far-right movement itself. The rise and growth of far-right groups are an inevitable outcome of the capitalists whose interests they represent, and no attempt to stop them can succeed without replacing the system that produces them — even if the effort is sincere. In this way, Lula ends up tricking workers into believing fascism has been defeated, without addressing systematic issues, disarming them for when the far-right return.

Conclusion. The charges against Bolsonaro are not a victory for the working class but merely a symptom of the ongoing power struggle between competing imperialist forces. Bolsonaro represents a reactionary, pro-U.S. faction of the capitalist class, willing to discard even the limited liberal democracy that exists in Brazil. The inherent contradictions of capitalism will continue to erode living standards, and workers will inevitably — and already do — bear the cost of capitalist competition.

Original article