

Brazil's post-Rousseff cabinet to include advocate of police repression

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Brazilian vice-President Michel Temer has invited São Paulo State's Public Safety secretary, Alexandre de Moraes, a strong advocate of police repression, to assume the key post of Minister of Justice in what is emerging as an extreme right-wing cabinet that will take the reins if the Senate votes to proceed with the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff.

The Senate is set to vote on Wednesday, May 11, with approval virtually assured. A "yes" vote would spell the immediate suspension of Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores—PT) President Rousseff for 180 days, during which a trial would decide her fate. In the meantime, Temer would be free to carry out the wholesale replacement of top officials.

On the eve of the vote, the legitimacy of the process was called into question by the new acting speaker of the lower house of the Brazilian parliament, Waldir Maranhão (whose predecessor Eduardo Cunha was removed on corruption charges), who claimed that this body's vote for impeachment was flawed and had to be done over. However, Senate leader Renan Calheiros dismissed the objection as "playing with democracy" and said the vote would go ahead.

In addition to Moraes, Temer's likely choices for a new cabinet are reported to include an evangelical Christian bishop to head the Science and Technology ministry, an anti-abortion congresswoman in the Human Rights secretariat and former Bank of Boston CEO and central bank president Henrique Meirelles as minister of economy, assigned to carry out sweeping economic "reforms" in the interests of Brazilian and international capital.

In the eyes of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, Moraes' qualifications as a jurist and law professor at the prestigious Faculty of Law of the University of São Paulo pale beside his two years as head of security policies in São Paulo, Brazil's richest and most populated state.

This position in the governor's cabinet consists chiefly of being the head civil officer of the state's feared and despised Military Police (PM), a veritable standing army of 100,000 men, replete with ranks, medals and a military justice system.

Each year this force kills more people than the combined total of fatalities inflicted by all the police departments of the United States, a country with 7.5 times the population of the state of

São Paulo. It is regularly seen patrolling the streets and confronting demonstrations with machine guns and armored vehicles. This force boasts to this day of its historical continuity dating back to the Brazilian Empire. This legacy includes having been deployed to other states and territories in the country to suppress numerous internal uprisings, using martial law powers to police working class and immigrant communities in Brazil during World War II and of having sided with the army against elected president João Goulart in the US-backed coup of 1964.

At the same time, Moraes, according to *O Estado de S. Paulo*, is likely to rein in the country's increasingly powerful Federal Police and to forge good relations with the army.

Both tasks were eschewed by recent ministers as being beyond their constitutional remit, since the Federal Police (PF) is a civil, but self-regulated body, and Brazil has a Ministry of Defense to oversee the Armed Forces. While the military has publicly rejected any possible intervention in the current crisis, as demanded by many in the country's far right, the PF has been enormously strengthened by being in charge of the Lava Jato (Carwash) investigation into the Petrobras kickbacks and bribery scandal. This probe has ensnared leading politicians of every party along with previously untouchable businessmen.

The inflated power wielded by the PF found stark expression in a warning last week by its officers' union to the Workers Party government. According to *Folha de S. Paulo*, the union said that it wouldn't stop retaliation by individual agents in the form of politicizing the Petrobras investigations if the government failed to meet salary demands.

It is no exaggeration to say that Alexandre de Moraes epitomizes the protracted drift to the right of Brazil's main opposition party, the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party). He has served for the last two years under the PSDB's most right-wing public figure, Geraldo Alckmin, in his fourth term as São Paulo governor. Alckmin's administration has been characterized by relentless regional chauvinism alongside law-and-order hysteria that has seen a militarization of many spheres of life.

The Military Police have supplanted campus police in the universities, hosted crews from "reality TV" evening shows that broadcast extra-judicial executions of suspects, and has

regularly assaulted journalists, demonstrators, partygoers in anti-drug raids, football fans and even players during matches.

In two other PSDB-governed states, local Military Police forces have even taken over 48 failing schools, staffing them with soldiers and officers and imposing military discipline upon children from poor families.

In this context, Moraes may leave his state office for a federal cabinet post just two days after losing in the courts a Freedom of Information (FI) case regarding fraud in his chief claim to fame: bringing São Paulo's homicide rate to the "non-epidemic level" of nine per every hundred thousand inhabitants. The secretary responded to an FI request by *Folha de S. Paulo* in early November, seeking documents in order to fact-check the homicide rate reduction claim, by declaring as classified police documents going back 50 years.

The government has been charged with hiding homicides and police murders under the label of "suspicious deaths," which have grown in direct proportion to the supposed fall in homicides over the last year, according an extensive *Estado de S. Paulo* story published in early March. According to the story, these "suspicious deaths" accounted for no less than 12,000 fatalities in this state of 40 million inhabitants in 2015.

Additionally, both *Folha de S. Paulo* and BBC Brasil in January cited scholars who said that the consolidation of a drug trafficking monopoly by the region's foremost criminal gang, Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), which terrorized the population with widespread attacks on public transport in May 2006, was the actual cause of much of the reduction of murders, as it reduced gang wars in slums and impoverished communities.

Finally, the government is being questioned over "creative accounting" regarding homicides, since it frequently counts mass killings as "one incident of murder." This also helps reduce the of police killings, since many episodes of mass murder in slums, poor neighborhoods and rural communities are later found to be caused by vendettas carried out by off-duty policeman and operations by semi-official police death squads.

Temer's likely assumption of the presidency and nomination of Alexandre de Moraes and other comparably reactionary figures is above all an indictment of the PT, which during its 13 years in control of the federal government allowed right and far-right figures to amass political strength and even assume key federal positions.

All around the country, the PT has courted and counted on support from evangelical Christian rightists, military bigots and representatives of traditional rural oligarchs, not to mention bankers and industrialists, giving each group its portion of government positions to fill.

Most of the small, regionally-based parties that turned the impeachment vote into a disgusting spectacle were until a month ago in the government coalition and were elected on the same regional slates as the PT's candidates. The PT has incessantly boasted of theses figures' supposed "republican

values" and "devotion to the nation."

Last but not least, the PT has itself become the foremost advocate of the strengthening of the Brazilian state, arming, literally but also morally, the Federal Police, the Brazilian Intelligence Agency and the Armed Forces. It created the National Security Force from the "best" soldiers of the Military Police forces throughout the country and guaranteed that no civil or military figures would be punished for their role in the murders, incidences of torture and disappearances carried out under the last dictatorship.

The PT's full complicity in this rightward turn may have found its last demonstration in its acceleration of the privatization of the airport system during what was likely the party's last week of rule. Its transparent aim was to once again prove its qualifications to carry out a reactionary, anti-working class policy more competently than its right-wing opponents, with the unions at its disposal to silence working class opposition.

The PT's thesis that the rule of law was never in danger from the right-wing and repressive forces that it promoted was enthusiastically embraced by the Brazilian pseudo-left, chiefly the PSOL (Socialism and Liberty Party) and its former presidential candidate Luciana Genro; Marina Silva and her REDE (Sustainability Network) party; and the Morenito PSTU (Unified Socialist Workers Party), which has systematically rejected any struggle to prepare the working class to resist the consequences of the sharp turn to the right being prepared with the PT's ouster.

Instead, advancing a slogan of "throw them all out," the PSTU has casually dismissed the deep concerns among workers and large sections of the population as to who is carrying out the removal of the PT government and to what ends. A class analysis for these forces is superfluous, as their sole concern is the short-term winning of influence for their organization and the well-placed union officials and academics who constitute its real political base.

Just as they have found their way to supporting imperialist regime-change operations from Libya to Syria, Egypt and Ukraine, so now the Brazilian Morenitos are politically complicit in regime-change in Brazil itself.



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