

Brazil's ex-president Lula turns himself in to police after supreme court ruling

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Former Workers Party (PT) president Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, better known as Lula, was arrested on Saturday after handing himself in to Brazil's Federal Police to serve a 12-year sentence for corruption and money laundering. Lula's prison order was issued less than 24 hours after the country's supreme court (STF) rejected his plea for habeas corpus. The ruling allowed the 8th Panel of the 4th Appeals Circuit Court (TRF-4) to jail Lula while he appeals the criminal conviction.

The process leading up to Lula's jailing dates back to November 2015 when a former PT senator raised the ex-president's involvement in a bribes-for-kickbacks scheme related to infrastructure contracts with the state-run oil giant Petrobras investigated by the Carwash (Lava-Jato) probe. The process highlights both the political bankruptcy of the PT during its almost 14 years in power and the rapid drive of the country's ruling elite towards authoritarian forms of rule.

The conviction is based on charges that after leaving the presidency in 2010, Lula accepted a seaside penthouse in the resort city of Guarujá, 70km southeast of São Paulo, worth approximately \$1 million, from the construction giant OAS, one of the companies involved in the Petrobras bribes-for-kickbacks scheme. The trial is not about Lula's oversight of a Brazilian capitalist economy rotted with corruption directed against the working class.

The evidence against Lula consists of little more than an OAS internal document containing nicknames related to the penthouse which OAS executives claim were used to refer to Lula and his late wife, Marisa Letícia. The documents purportedly show that the penthouse, still legally owned by OAS, was covertly reserved for Lula but that ownership was not officially transferred.

Significantly, both 13th district judge, Sergio Moro,

and the three-judge panel in the TRF-4 declined to name any specific favor granted or promised by Lula to OAS, claiming instead that "likelihood beyond a reasonable doubt" of his rendered services could be inferred from "the whole" of his demonstrated relationships with the construction giant's owners.

Under a law Lula himself signed in 2010, the ex-president is now barred from running in the October presidential elections because of his conviction by the appeals court. For almost two years, Lula has led in polls with 35 percent of support. Polls have also shown support for fascist reserve army captain Jair Bolsonaro, who polls at 20 percent, the same level as the expected abstention rate. The support for Lula and Bolsonaro reflects widespread disgust with every political party, including the PT.

The recent anticipation that Lula's habeas corpus petition could be granted unleashed a barrage of military threats on Tuesday, April 3, that undoubtedly made the Supreme Court feel it was voting at gunpoint in order to avoid a coup.

Brazil's oldest daily, *O Estado de São Paulo*, which backed the 1964-1985 US-backed military dictatorship and is a longtime military mouthpiece, launch the first warning shot. It quoted reserve army general and former East Division commander Luiz Schroeder Lessa as saying that granting Lula's habeas corpus petition would mean "there will be no alternative except for a military intervention" and that the supreme court would be "inducing violence" by allowing him to appeal while free. Hours later, army commander Eduardo Villas Boas tweeted "that the army shares the well-meaning citizens' feelings against impunity [for Lula]."

The order by Moro denying Lula's habeas petition, which the supreme court then affirmed, was written in a

distinctive fascistic tone, justifying the early arrest on the grounds that the clarifying appeals allowed by law were “a delaying pathology that should be wiped out of the legal world.” The Brazilian edition of the Spanish *El País* found on April 6 that the attorney-general’s office had sent the TRF-4 a secret request that the warrant be sped up “in order to undermine [Lula’s] felling of omnipotence.” This would prevent Lula from “manipulat[ing] the masses” to obstruct the arrest.

After Moro granted Lula 24 hours to turn himself in on Thursday, Lula went to the headquarters of the metalworkers union of the so-called “ABCD region” southeast of the city of São Paulo, where the PT organized a demonstration with thousands of supporters who tried to block him from leaving to face arrest. Lula’s defense lawyers then negotiated more time from prosecutors to avoid a bloody crackdown on the demonstration.

Lula finally turned himself in after a one-hour speech in which he made every effort to assure he was no threat to the interests of capitalism, by recalling the 1980s strikes which brought down the US-backed dictatorship and claiming to have always “learned from workers” how to proceed. In fact, Lula’s government worked from its inception to stabilize capitalism in Brazil and advertise itself as an example of a bourgeois party of rule to the imperialist powers. The services Lula rendered to imperialism famously earned him the 2009 complimentary remarks by Barack Obama that he was “the man” and the most popular politician on earth.

The PT has been the preferred party of rule of the Brazilian bourgeoisie for almost 14 years, setting up the whole repressive apparatus that is presently turning against the PT. Lula’s party even appointed five of the six Supreme Court Justices who voted against his habeas corpus petition.

Amid a drive to dictatorship and a military intervention in Rio de Janeiro, the PT is courting the military, blaming the press for “misusing” Villas Boas’s remarks and saying they are “also against impunity” “like Villas Boas,” with PT’s candidate for governor in Rio, Celso Amorim, writing in a February 25 article in PT’s mouthpiece *CartaCapital* that the right-wing president Michel Temer must be opposed because in the 1990s “Brazil rejected this subject mentality for the role of the armed forces,” by which “they should fight crime and leave aside ambitious

national projects such as the nuclear submarine and the supersonic fighter jets.”



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