

# Brazil's Bolsonaro threatens Glenn Greenwald, ratchets up fascist rants

Miguel Andrade  
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The end of the first six months of the Bolsonaro government in Brazil has been marked by a sharp escalation of the far-right president's fascistic rants. These have been directed against the government agencies responsible for the identification of and reparations to victims of the 1964-1985 dictatorship, the victims themselves as well as the victims of the murderous Brazilian police forces.

This has been combined with direct threats against his critics, charging them with "aiding criminals" and undermining "national security." Prominent among them is the Rio de Janeiro-based journalist, Glenn Greenwald.

The rapid escalation of the ruling elite's authoritarian drive found its clearest expression in the Justice Ministry's issuing on July 25 of the so-called Ordinance 666, directing the deportation within 48 hours of *suspects* of terrorism, human-, drug-, or arms-trafficking, and child pornography. Under the ordinance, those accused of these crimes will be given only 24 hours to appeal their deportation. The anti-democratic measure was enacted with virtually no reaction from the political establishment, except for a formal protest from one department of the Attorney General's Office and the usual lip service by a few Congress members.

The ordinance was widely viewed as a direct threat to Greenwald. He has become a central target of Bolsonaro since coordinating the exposure, beginning in early June, by the *Intercept* and other media outlets of the corruption at the heart of the so-called "Carwash" (Lava-Jato) corruption probe, which uncovered a massive bribes-and-kickbacks scheme centered at the state-run oil giant Petrobras.

The scheme, overseen by then-ruling Workers Party (PT), was exploited by the ruling class to effect a violent right-wing shift in the Brazilian political system amid the widespread abandonment of the PT by working class voters opposed to its austerity measures. This led ultimately to the impeachment of PT president Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the jailing of former PT president Lula da Silva in 2018, who as a result, was barred from running in the 2018 election.

Bolsonaro tapped the leading judge in the investigation, Sérgio Moro, as his justice minister, who is responsible for the fascistic deportation ordinance. He was exposed in messages obtained by the *Intercept* of having improperly instructed the prosecution in the case against Lula and, most significantly, directing the Attorney General's Office to drop charges against most of the other politicians involved in the scandal.

The revelations have further engulfed the widely hated Bolsonaro in the same political crisis which led to his election as an anti-corruption demagogue in the first place. The government's response has been to organize a "national security" scare, prompting calls for Greenwald's

deportation by members of Bolsonaro's Social Liberal Party (PSL) and for Moro to direct the Federal Police (PF) to investigate supposed hacks from his cell phone purported to be the origin of the leak. There have been further utterly unsubstantiated allegations that Greenwald acted in collaboration with "Russian intelligence."

This witch-hunt has also provided Bolsonaro with the political environment to launch a full-throated defense of the crimes of the 1964-1985 US-backed military dictatorship. He has attacked the victims of the torture regime as liars and "terrorists," branded legal experts as "collaborators" and charged the already cowardly and toothless agencies formed to investigate the dictatorship's crimes with posing an intolerable threat to the national interest.

The government has felt emboldened by collaboration at the end of June of many of its nominal opponents in Congress, and even the Supreme Court, in approving his austerity agenda, including the hated "pensions reform," which cleared the Brazilian House last week and will now be voted in the Senate. Facing massive popular opposition, but certain that no faction of the political establishment will act to destabilize the government and risk the derailing of his austerity package, Bolsonaro has accelerated the buildup of both police state measures and of his far-right base centered—as in Trump's United States and the AfD's Germany—in the security forces.

Such a buildup has been accelerated since the July 23 arrest under extremely murky circumstances of four supposed hackers accused of providing the material to the *Intercept*. Greenwald has denied that the arrested suspects were his source, saying he received the documents before the date the alleged hacks identified by the Federal Police (PF) took place, on June 4.

The PF has further claimed that on June 12, the arrested suspects sought to use Manuela D'Ávila, a Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) member and the running mate of the PT's 2018 presidential candidate Fernando Haddad, as an intermediary for making contact with and relaying the material implicating Moro and others to Greenwald.

The arrests were the pretext for another unsubstantiated allegation that Bolsonaro's phone had also been hacked, which would be labeled a threat to national security and used to justify sweeping charges against the hackers—and ultimately Greenwald—under the dictatorship-era "National Security Law."

Two days later, the ominous deportation ordinance was enacted, only for Bolsonaro to declare that Greenwald had been "smart" in marrying Congressman David Miranda, which would prevent his deportation under the Migration Law, which gives foreigners married to Brazilians wider rights. Greenwald, a US citizen, is married to Miranda of the pseudo-left Socialism and Liberty party (PSOL), with

whom he is raising two adopted Brazilian children.

The sheer illegality of the 48-hour summary deportation ordinance, uncontested by the political system, makes clear, however, that such cynical “assurances” by Bolsonaro are worthless.

Exposing the accelerated breakdown of democratic forms of rule in Brazil, Moro reacted to the arrests of the hackers by further intervening in the investigation and seeking the support of Justices of the (Civil) High Court (STJ) and the Supreme Court (STF) for destroying the alleged evidence, making impossible any legal procedure against the suspects. He reportedly called the justices and warned them that they too had been hacked.

This was only stopped by the unilateral intervention of two STF Justices, Luiz Fux—featured in the messages made public by Greenwald as an ally of Moro—and Alexandre de Moraes, the minister of the Court. Moraes is overseeing another illegal investigation of the “defamation” of justices initiated by the Court’s president José Antônio Dias Toffoli. The self-serving intervention of the justices has clearly nothing to do with constitutional worries, but with controlling evidence that may implicate them in the all-encompassing corruption of the Brazilian political system and allow for the persecution of the court’s critics.

The exposure of the corruption saturating every branch of the Brazilian state has emboldened Bolsonaro in his initiation of a sweeping attack on the fragile infrastructure of the Brazilian government formed to deal with the crimes of the dictatorship. On July 29, he slandered the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), associating it with the September 6, 2018 attempt on his life at a campaign rally. The convoluted pretext was the OAB’s protest against the treatment of the lawyer of Bolsonaro’s assailant, Adélio Bispo, as a “collaborator” of one of his other clients suspected of involvement with Brazil’s largest drug gang, the PCC.

Later on the same day, in a carefully rehearsed “live” transmission on Facebook while having his hair cut, Bolsonaro provocatively said that, if the OAB’s president, Felipe Santa Cruz, desired, Bolsonaro could tell him how his father Fernando Santa Cruz—a disappeared dissident under the dictatorship—had died in 1974.

Amid many still unsolved crimes, the death of Santa Cruz is one of the state murders recognized by the Brazilian government. While Bolsonaro has claimed that Santa Cruz was executed in an internal clash within a guerrilla group, the head of the government’s Murdered and Disappeared Commission tasked with investigating the period, State Attorney Eugênia Augusta Gonzaga, ordered the release of Santa Cruz’s death certificate prepared by the commission, proving he had been murdered by state forces.

Two days later, she was purged from the panel, along with three other members, who were replaced by a new pro-military four-member majority. The new commission summarily cancelled a public ceremony prepared to mark the official recognition of Santa Cruz’s state murder. Asked by the press about the purge, Bolsonaro replied with a fascist rant: “what changed is that now the government is right wing. Nobody complained before when the commission was staffed with terrorists”—referring to the experts who uncovered the military regime’s crimes.

Last Saturday, a UOL report revealed that the government’s Amnesty Commission, tasked with deciding on financial compensation for those persecuted by the dictatorship, had also been purged in March. Staffed with a new pro-military majority, it is discussing the denial of compensation by accusing claimants of “terrorism” and using memoirs of pro-regime military officials as

evidence in the cases. Since being established by the formerly exiled President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 2002, the commission has recognized no less than 39,000 victims, including those murdered and tortured by the US-backed dictatorship and those forced into exile or fired for political reasons during the 20-year period it is charged with investigating.

Despite the overwhelming opposition to Bolsonaro, however, the self-styled opposition, led by the PT, is fully engaged in assuring that nothing destabilizes the government, and that if any change is needed to guarantee profits, this should be done within the palaces of the Brazilian capital or the salons of the financial centers. Despite all the ink spent by PT representatives and pundits in calling Bolsonaro and STF justices “fascists,” it took no more than a few days for “opposition” pundits to expose their utter lack of seriousness by interpreting the self-serving attitude of the Brazilian supreme court as proof that “light is breaking through the darkness,” in the words of the editor of the pro-PT *Fórum* magazine.

The editor, Renato Rovai, makes no bones about the opportunistic character of his politics by writing after Bolsonaro’s comments on the death of Santa Cruz that “lawyers have big noses for moving according to the change in the winds,” and that the attack on the OAB would cause defections in Bolsonaro’s base of support.

For his part, the PT’s former presidential candidate Haddad extended another olive branch to the military in his weekly *Folha de S. Paulo* column of August 3 by counseling the “proud (briosas) Armed Forces” about “not yet having fully assimilated the concept of popular sovereignty.”

Barely a week later, the ultra-right *Veja* magazine featured an interview with supreme court chief Toffoli affirming that in April he had consulted with the military and politicians about possible ways to remove Bolsonaro from power or declare his unfitness. Subsequently, however, he had agreed to support Bolsonaro’s economic agenda in order to defuse instability.

Workers and students entering into struggle must be clear that the PT and its pseudo-left apologists are fully engaged in attempting to block the popular hatred for Bolsonaro developing into a wider questioning of the bourgeois order. The sparse and ritualistic demonstrations being called against the pension reform are designed to let off steam and bring about the smooth approval of the reform. They serve to further expose the PT and the unions as full participants in the conspiracies of the ruling class.



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