

Bolsonaro calls for mass fascist demonstration against Electoral Court on Brazil's Independence Day

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Just over 70 days before Brazil's October 2 election, fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro is escalating preparations for a violent seizure of power in event of a likely electoral defeat.

On Sunday, July 24, in front of a mass audience at the Maracanãzinho gymnasium in Rio de Janeiro, Bolsonaro called on his supporters to fill the streets on September 7 in order to back his fabricated claims that the October elections will be rigged by the Electoral Court (TSE) in favor of the front-runner, former Workers Party president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Menacingly, Bolsonaro told the crowd to go to the streets "one last time" to target the Supreme Court (STF), whose members he called "a few black-clad deaf people, who must understand what is the voice of the people, must understand the Executive alongside Congress."

The rally marked the official opening of the convention of his Liberal Party (PL), currently the largest party in the Brazilian House, to launch his reelection bid.

September 7 will mark 200 hundred years since Brazil declared independence from Portugal in 1822. It will feature traditional military parades across the country as well as a special reception for foreign delegations, with particularly distasteful and reactionary demonstrations of traditionalism, such as the transport from Portugal of the preserved heart of the first Brazilian emperor, Pedro I.

Bolsonaro targeted STF justices specifically because they preside over the Electoral Court and are thus ultimately responsible for the certification of election results.

Bolsonaro has for four years relentlessly attacked Brazil's electronic balloting system, which he claims can be easily hacked and cannot be audited. Such claims have been repeatedly debunked by the TSE itself, as well as by other parties involved, such as Federal Police specialists and the military in the years prior to Bolsonaro's rise to power. Polls have also repeatedly shown that a vast majority of Brazilians reject the president's claims.

The convention marked the end of a hectic fortnight in Brazilian politics, which provided the clearest exposure yet of support within the military for Bolsonaro's coup preparations.

On July 12, Defense Minister Gen. Paulo Sergio de Oliveira announced that the military is preparing its own "eight-step" parallel election certification program, chiefly incorporating Bolsonaro's demand that a "parallel vote count" be made with

paper ballots at selected voting stations in order to verify the results from the voting machines.

The Brazilian military is constitutionally empowered to participate in the organization of the elections but must do so publicly and side by side with civilian organizations such as the Bar Association (OAB). But thus far, the generals have declined to endorse the meetings called by the TSE. Instead, the Defense Ministry has claimed that its "concerns" over the integrity of the voting machines cannot be disclosed publicly, keeping open the possibility that they will refuse to endorse the results announced by the TSE.

Also, for the first time since the introduction of the voting machines in 1996, the Defense Ministry demanded the TSE send it special reports from the 2014 and 2018 elections, in order to verify alleged frauds in voter registrations.

The questioning of the 2014 and 2018 elections by the Defense Ministry represents a direct alignment with Bolsonaro. The president claims, without presenting a shred of evidence, that there was an attempt to rig the 2018 election in favor of the PT, preventing him from claiming victory in the first round.

Upon leaving the PT's parliamentary coalition in 2016, after 10 years as a back-bencher, Bolsonaro also started supporting the claims of the 2014 presidential runner-up, Aécio Neves from the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), that the election of PT president Dilma Rousseff had been rigged. Neves sought to annul Rousseff's second inauguration in 2015 by charging the PT with corrupt financing of its campaign, making its victory illegitimate. Contrary to the conspiracy theories advanced by Bolsonaro, however, Neves never claimed the voting machines had actually been manipulated.

Before the PL convention and only four days after the presentation of the unprecedented demands by the Defense Ministry, Bolsonaro summoned foreign ambassadors and delegations to the Planalto presidential offices to provide them with "proof" substantiating his electoral fraud fabrications. Bolsonaro repeated false claims of manipulation of the balloting that have already been debunked several times.

Finally, last Thursday, the conservative daily *Estado de S. Paulo* revealed that chief members of Bolsonaro's cabinet, led by the chief-of-staff Ciro Nogueira, are pressuring the next TSE president, STF Justice Alexandre de Moraes, to endorse the

military's hastily organized parallel vote. The report revealed that presidential aides are threatening the Court that "a single WhatsApp message" from Bolsonaro could unleash violence like that seen in US President Donald Trump's January 6 Capitol putsch, effectively declaring the court a legitimate target if it refuses to bow to Bolsonaro.

In contrast to these intense and growing dangers, which have no precedent since the fall of the 1964-1985 US-backed military dictatorship, the Brazilian corporate media and the parliamentary opposition led by the PT, have deliberately downplayed the threat represented by the far-right military conspiracy.

The "proof" of the "resilience" of Brazilian democracy used by the press and the PT alike consists of a series of declarations by national bankers and foreign warmongers, such as US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who declared in the most perfunctory fashion last Tuesday in a meeting in Brasilia with Defense officials of Organization of American States member nations that "military authorities should submit themselves to civil rule."

A typical reaction to Austin's remarks came from the PT's senior member in the House, Deputy Paulo Pimenta, in an interview with the PT-aligned Fórum website headlined "Even bankers and Biden defend democracy against Bolsonaro."

Former president Lula has also repeated his praise of Brazil's military, ignoring its bloody history, telling UOL on Wednesday, "I think we must account for the fact that the military are more reliable than Bolsonaro," adding, "He was expelled from the Army for bad behavior. So how can we think of a coup?"

Contrary to the illusions peddled by Lula, the Brazilian military celebrates every year the overthrow of elected Labor Party President João Goulart and the installation of the 1964-1985 dictatorship. Meanwhile, the think tanks connected to it have already worked out plans for the wholesale suppression of left-wing militancy in Brazil until 2035.

For their part, the unions controlled by the parties in the PT electoral coalition, including the two largest union federations, the CUT and Força Sindical, have decided to support two virtually identical documents "in defense of democracy" to be presented in two weeks.

Both are spearheaded by business associations such as the Brazilian Bank Association (Febraban) and the São Paulo Federation of Industries (FIESP)—"Letter in defense of democracy and justice"—and big bankers and tycoons owning some of the largest companies in Brazil, such as the Itaú Bank and the Klabin, Suzano and Votorantim industrial empires—"Letter to the Brazilians in defense of a democratic state based on the rule of law (Estado Democrático de Direito)."

Both documents are to be presented hours apart on the same day, August 11, at the São Paulo Faculty of Law (FDUSP). The wording of the current letters makes a mockery of any pretense that they represent any genuine defense of democratic forms of rule, much less of workers' social and democratic rights. As revealed by *Folha de S. Paulo* on Thursday, the phrasing of the letter spearheaded by the Suzano, Klabin and Votorantim bosses was repeatedly redacted to exclude any mention of the word "coup" in order to avoid conflict with Bolsonaro's backers in the Congress and business circles.

Hand-in-hand with attempts to promote illusions in these empty gestures is the suppression of any working class mobilization in resistance of Bolsonaro's conspiracy. The PT has already called off its traditional September 7 "Cry of the Excluded" (Grito dos Excluídos) demonstrations for fear of fomenting a massive opposition to Bolsonaro. It has postponed them to September 10.

The PT-led opposition, while seeking the support of bankers and imperialist powers against Bolsonaro, promotes illusions in the bogus "letters for democracy" to cover up the terminal state of bourgeois democracy in Brazil and internationally. It presents the spearheads of reaction, including US imperialism and Brazil's industrialists and bankers, as forces for democracy. The party also seeks to cover up its responsibility for 13 years of rule in which the likes of Bolsonaro were allowed to thrive in Congress, while his supporters in the military brass were able to blood their troops in the massacres the party oversaw in Brazil's slums and in the UN "peace" mission in Haiti.

The claim that US imperialism, currently engaged in the opening shots of a potentially nuclear third world war against China and Russia, has any democratic role to play in Brazil is preposterous. But its political roots lie in the need to disarm the working class, which is deeply hostile to Bolsonaro's austerity, murderous handling of the pandemic and authoritarian drive.

As proven by bitter historical experience, in their unbreakable commitment to capitalist rule, bourgeois "democratic" forces such as the PT fear the working class immeasurably more than they fear fascist reaction.

The PT's steady march to the right, presenting itself as the bulwark of capitalist stability and reliable tool of the same forces that supported Bolsonaro for four years, can only end in disaster for Brazilian workers. A true opposition to the international drive to austerity, war and dictatorship can only be mounted independently and in opposition to the whole "democratic" bourgeois setup, including the PT and its affiliated unions.



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