

Former president Bolsonaro and military chiefs face trial for attempted fascist coup in Brazil

Tomas Castanheira
27 March 2025

On Wednesday, Brazil's Supreme Court (STF) accepted the Attorney General's Office (PGR) indictment against fascistic ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, accused of leading the coup conspiracy that culminated in the invasion of government headquarters in Brasilia on January 8, 2023.

The hearings took place in two sessions that were broadcast live. They analyzed the cases of Bolsonaro and seven of his allies, accused of constituting the "hard core" of the coup plot. They are the former chief of staff of the presidency and Bolsonaro's vice-presidential running mate, Gen. Walter Braga Netto; the former Minister of Defense, Gen. Paulo Sérgio Nogueira; the former Minister of the Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI), Gen. Augusto Heleno; the former Commander of the Navy, Adm. Almir Garnier Santos; the former director-general of the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Abin), Alexandre Ramagem; the former Minister of Justice and former Secretary of Public Security of the Federal District, Anderson Torres; and Bolsonaro's former aide-de-camp, Col. Mauro Cid.

By the unanimous decision of the five judges in the STF First Panel, Bolsonaro and the seven accomplices were put in the dock in a criminal case that will unfold over the coming months.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted, the indictment now accepted by the Supreme Court is based on a vast body of evidence that "paints a sinister portrait of the military-fascist cabal that headed the Brazilian state under the Bolsonaro government" that was "responsible for systematically leading a 'conspiratorial plot armed and executed against the democratic institutions.'"

The opening of the case against Bolsonaro and his fascist co-conspirators, almost all members of the upper echelons of the military, is an unprecedented event in Brazilian history. Never have crimes against democracy been brought to trial in the country.

The transition to civilian rule in Brazil, whose 40th anniversary was celebrated on March 15, took place without any trial or punishment of those responsible for the coup that overthrew President João Goulart in 1964 and for the atrocious crimes committed under the military dictatorship that ruled for

the next two decades.

The advance of the prosecution of Bolsonaro and his cabal will have explosive implications for Brazil's tumultuous political situation. Far from being the end of the story, the trial of those responsible for the January 8 coup will only bring to light and exacerbate the deep political processes that provoked it.

In this week's hearings, the defendants' lawyers have outlined the fundamental lines of defense they intend to use. They have claimed insufficient material evidence, challenged the validity of Mauro Cid's plea bargains and contested the legitimacy of the rapporteur of the case, Alexandre de Moraes, and of the trial being held before the First Panel of the STF, instead of its plenum.

However, the most critical response of Bolsonaro and his fascist allies to the judicial siege they face is being prepared outside the courts.

Bolsonaro's reaction to the indictment made this fact plain. Having attended the first session of the trial in person and from the front row, in a gesture of political defiance, he called a press conference immediately after the STF's decision was made.

In a speech that returned to the aggressive rhetoric used during the coup attempt, Bolsonaro once again baselessly charged that fraud was committed in the 2022 elections. He declared:

I'm being accused of an attempted coup. People must have noticed something in the way Minister Alexandre de Moraes conducts himself so incisively... there's something weird going on. What is he trying to hide?(...)

Was there interference in the TSE [Superior Electoral Court] in the 2022 elections, or not?... One hundred percent reliable polls? During the 2022 elections, the TSE influenced, played heavily against me and in favor of [Workers Party-PT] candidate Lula.

Ten days ago, Bolsonaro and his allies set the political scene for the STF hearings with a street demonstration in Rio de Janeiro with the slogan “amnesty now!” for those involved in the coup attempt. The demand is associated with a bill put forward in the House of Representatives, which, according to a survey by *Estado de São Paulo*, has the support of 190 congressmen and is rejected by only 126. The remaining 197 deputies have either refused to take a stand or did not answer the poll.

In addition to Bolsonaro and the most reactionary members of the Brazilian legislature, the demonstration was attended by four governors, including those of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the richest states in the country.

Highlighting the cases of the “foot soldiers” who received harsh sentences for participating in the January 8 invasion of the government buildings in Brasilia, the demonstration sought to reinforce the narrative that the investigation and trial of those responsible for the coup attempt is nothing more than political persecution of Bolsonaro and his allies.

The fascist ex-president repeated these accusations in an interview with the *Financial Times*, published on Tuesday. Attacking de Moraes, Bolsonaro said: “He already has the sentence for me, 28 years in prison.” “We have a problem of dictatorship, a real dictatorship,” he concluded.

Giving a sinister preview of the main strategy of the Brazilian fascists, Bolsonaro told the FT: “Brazil doesn’t have a way out of this situation on its own. It needs support from abroad.” At another point he said, “American help is very welcome,” thanking President Donald Trump for shutting down USAID, which he accuses of having financed alleged fraud in Brazil’s 2022 electoral process.

Bolsonaro and his allies are announcing ever more openly their quest to continue their dictatorial conspiracy by organizing a new coup attempt in direct collaboration with US imperialism.

The most significant development in this direction was the recent announcement by Eduardo Bolsonaro, the former president’s son, that he is abandoning his seat as a federal congressman in Brazil to move permanently to the United States. “Here, I will be able to focus on seeking the just punishment that Alexandre de Moraes and his Federal Police Gestapo deserve,” he declared in a March 18 podcast.

Eduardo declared that he will campaign for the US government to intervene against the upcoming 2026 presidential elections in Brazil if the candidacy of his father, who the electoral court has already ruled ineligible to run, is not accepted. “That’s the message I would take to President Trump. But the people around him are already very aware of what is happening,” he said.

He concluded: “In the coming weeks we’re going to see more and more participation by the White House and [US] Congress in holding back the momentum of the [Brazilian] dictators. ... I think everyone has already understood that in

Brazil there is no possibility of defending this game.”

The fascist provocations by Bolsonaro and his son, directly reminiscent of Washington’s successful plot to overthrow President João Goulart in 1964, represent the gravest threat to the Brazilian working class. These dangers are further intensified by US imperialism’s furious drive to counter the massive economic influence acquired by China in Latin America and to re-establish its waning hegemony over the region by force.

Eclipsed by China as Brazil’s main trading partner, Washington seeks close ties between the Pentagon and Brazil’s military to counter the decline of US economic influence. Bolsonaro counts on support from this same military command to achieve his aims.

The persistent threat of fascism in Brazil highlights the urgent need to carry out a decisive reckoning with the living legacy of the military dictatorship. This task requires the mobilization of a mass movement that strikes at the very source of the growing attacks on democratic rights: the rotten capitalist order.

Brazilian workers and youth cannot entrust this historical task to the ruling Workers Party (PT) and its pseudo-left satellites and allied trade unions, whose main task is to preserve illusions in the bankrupt bourgeois political system.

Sowing complacency in the face of the serious risks posed by the current situation, the PT and its allies celebrated the recent STF decision as a decisive victory against Bolsonaro and the military coup plotters. The leaders of PT and the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) issued official statements joyfully proclaiming, “Great day!” accompanied by jocular comments and appeals to reactionary patriotism.

What the forces of the PT and the pseudo-left fear, above all, is that the exposure of Bolsonaro’s and the military’s conspiracy will provoke a mass political movement that merges with a growing wave of strikes across the country, in which the working class is coming into struggle against the capitalist austerity measures that the Lula administration seeks to implement.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact