

# Trump enacts tariffs, sanctions state officials and invokes “national emergency” against Brazil

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On Wednesday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order imposing devastating 50 percent tariffs against Brazil, which take effect next week.

Trump’s order represents, in every sense, an unprecedented escalation of US imperialist aggression against Latin America.

Written as a declaration of war against an enemy country, the order declares a “national emergency,” classifying the Brazilian government as a “threat to the security” of the United States.

The document wastes no time trying to justify the tariffs as a means of ensuring supposed “economic justice” for the US, which enjoys a substantial trade surplus with Latin America’s largest economy. It crudely presents them as an instrument to subjugate the constitutionally established government to Washington’s dictates and intervene directly in Brazil’s internal politics.

The main political development used by Trump to justify this intervention is the ongoing trial of Brazil’s former President Jair Bolsonaro and his fascist military clique for the attempted coup d’état that culminated in the January 8, 2023, insurrection in Brasília.

In a grotesque inversion of the facts, Trump—who works relentlessly to impose a presidential dictatorship in the United States—accuses the Brazilian government of “politically persecuting a former President of Brazil, which is contributing to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Brazil, to politically motivated intimidation in that country, and to human rights abuses.”

The case against Bolsonaro and his co-conspirators is entering its final stages, with a ruling by the Supreme Court scheduled before the end of the year.

The trial has followed constitutional legal procedures and is based on ample evidence, which undeniably demonstrates that the former president and his allies systematically attempted to overthrow the Brazilian democratic regime, to prevent the inauguration of President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party - PT), and impose a presidential dictatorship backed by the military.

But, according to Trump—whose fascist goals and methods

applied in the January 6, 2021 coup attempt in Washington served as the key example for Bolsonaro—the trial is a “Witch Hunt” that must “stop immediately.” Its continuation, his decree announces, is “undermining the ability of Brazil to hold a free and fair election of the presidency in 2026.” In other words, Washington will not recognize the next elected government.

Speaking like the *Führer* he aspires to become, Trump concluded:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, find that the scope and gravity of the recent policies, practices, and actions of the Government of Brazil constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat ... to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and hereby declare a national emergency with respect to that threat.

Explaining the rationale behind the tariff increase, he added: “I am taking the action in this order only for the purpose of addressing the national emergency declared in this order and not for any other purpose.” This argument sheds light on the logic behind not only the attack on Brazil, but the trade war Washington is unleashing against the whole world.

At the same time, the document announced a list of hundreds of products that will be exempt from the 40 percent tariff increase (which comes on top of a previous 10 percent increase at the beginning of the year). It includes critical goods such as civil aircraft, oil, and other strategic raw materials.

The exemptions, hailed as a “retreat” in the Brazilian media, only reinforce the arbitrary and openly interventionist character of the imperialist attack.

In addition to Brazilian institutions in general, Trump’s order specifically targeted Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, the judge presiding over the trial of Bolsonaro and his fellow coup conspirators. Moraes is, furthermore, directing

Brazilian state initiatives to regulate communication on the internet and has taken legal decisions against companies such as Twitter and Rumble in the recent past.

Immediately after declaring its “national emergency” against Brazil, the US government announced drastic economic sanctions against Moraes, which include the freezing of his assets and bank accounts in the US and a ban on his entry into the country.

The sanctions on Moraes were based on the Magnitsky Act, which has been used in the past against countries such as Russia, Iran, and Venezuela. Its application against a top-level authority of a country historically allied to the United States is completely unprecedented.

The war-like measures being taken against Brazil are reminiscent of the declaration of a “national emergency” against Venezuela by the Obama administration exactly 10 years ago, in March 2015.

On that occasion, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote of Obama’s imperialist measure:

The order, on its face, turned reality inside out. Far from Venezuela posing a threat to the US, successive US governments have repeatedly intervened in Venezuela’s affairs....

This latest action, with its assertion of a “national emergency” and threat to “national security,” suggests that more direct intervention is under contemplation, including by military means.

The WWSW assessment was entirely vindicated, with the following years marked by imperialism’s unlawful and aggressive pursuit of regime change in Caracas. The same rationale underlies Trump’s order against Brazil, which is even more sweeping and bellicose.

The adoption of such a stance in relation to Brazil—the largest country, economy and military power in Latin America—is a deeply reckless and inflammatory move by Washington. Whatever retreats, concessions or arrangements may follow, the relations of US imperialism to Latin America have reached a new irreversible historical stage.

The naked interventionism in Brazilian politics goes far beyond what the official media frames as the “ideological agenda” of Donald Trump. His ruthless policies manifest the crisis of US imperialism and the desperate drive to reverse the prolonged decline of its global position through the means of force.

The neocolonial order that Washington is attempting to impose in Latin America is deeply linked to its global imperialist objectives. The issues at stake were laid bare by US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth during a conqueror’s visit to Panama in April:

The Obama administration took their eye off the ball and let China just sweep in all over South and Central America with their economic and cultural influence—cutting deals with local governments for bad infrastructure, and surveillance, and indebtedness.

President Trump said, “Not anymore—we’re taking our backyard back.” That’s why I was there for a conference of Central and South American countries as well. We’re going to invest in ways that serve American interests in our backyard as we stop the sphere of Chinese influence.

Bolsonaro and his fascist allies, most prominently his son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, openly present themselves as tools for these imperialist aims, deeply rejected by the Brazilian and Latin American people. The PT government is “handing Brazil over to China” and supplying material for the “construction of atomic bombs,” Bolsonaro lied recently, adding: “I have already passed this on to Trump’s team. ... They are concerned ... that Brazil will consolidate itself as a new Venezuela.”

The Brazilian Socialist Equality Group (GSI) unmistakably opposes Washington’s tariffs and criminal political intervention against Brazil and denounces it as an imperialist attack against a historically oppressed country. However, the Brazilian and Latin American working class cannot fight imperialism by sharing the same political camp of its “own” national bourgeoisie.

As the GSI recently declared in its statement denouncing the nationalist trap being set by the Lula administration, the unions and the pseudo-left against the workers and youth in Brazil:

Basing itself upon the revolutionary tradition of Trotskyism represented by the ICFI, the GSI calls on the Brazilian working class to respond to the rise of imperialism and war, the threat of fascism and mounting social inequality by fighting alongside its international class brothers and sisters for a global socialist revolution.



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