

Bolsonaro sentenced to 27 years for Brazil coup attempt

Tomas Castanheira
13 September 2025

On Thursday, former President Jair Bolsonaro was sentenced to 27 years and three months in prison for the fascist coup attempt that culminated in the January 8, 2023 insurrection in Brasília.

The conviction for crimes of coup d'état, violent abolition of the Democratic Rule of Law, armed criminal organization, and damages to public patrimony received favorable votes from four of the five justices of the First Panel of Brazil's Supreme Court (STF).

In addition to the former president, seven members of the "crucial nucleus" of the coup conspiracy were convicted for the same crimes. Gen. Walter Souza Braga Netto, former Chief of Staff and Defense Minister and Bolsonaro's vice-presidential candidate in 2022, was sentenced to 26 years in prison; Adm. Almir Garnier Santos, former Navy commander, to 24 years in prison; Anderson Gustavo Torres, former Justice Minister and former Federal District Security Secretary, to 24 years in prison; Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira, former Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI) Minister, to 21 years in prison; Gen. Paulo Sérgio Nogueira de Oliveira, former Defense Minister and former Army chief, to 19 years in prison; Alexandre Ramagem Rodrigues, former Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Abin) director, to 16 years in prison; and Lt. Col. Mauro Cesar Barbosa Cid, Bolsonaro's former aide-de-camp, had his sentence reduced to two years in prison due to a plea bargain agreement.

The STF trial was based on the understanding that the defendants formed a "criminal organization" under Bolsonaro's leadership. Between June 2021 and January 8, 2023, it committed various "executive acts" intended, first, to attack the democratic rule of law and, subsequently, to promote a coup d'état.

Although the two elements of the coup conspiracy are inseparably linked, the justices argued that in the first, "it is the constituted government itself, the constituted executive that intends to diminish or end the system of checks and balances." In the second, "the passive subject is the executive."

The case's rapporteur, Justice Alexandre de Moraes, supported his vote to convict by introducing what he deemed 13 "sequential acts" of the coup conspiracy. He declared:

The first point is precisely the use of public agencies by the criminal organization for monitoring political adversaries and for structuring and executing the strategy. And at this moment, in June 2021, the first executive acts were committed to attack the judicial power and mainly the electoral justice, discrediting it, already to delegitimize a potential negative result in the 2022 elections, discrediting democracy itself.

Subsequently, we have the already public executive acts,

with serious threats to electoral justice, which derive from all the preparation and use of public agencies. ... [Subsequently,] the use of serious threat to restrict the exercise of judicial power on the famous September 7, 2021. ...

We have the improper use of the Federal Highway Police structure in the second round of elections and the improper use of the Armed Forces structure in relation to the electronic voting system oversight report from the Ministry of Defense.

The activities of this conspiracy assumed a frenetic pace and an increasingly violent character with the approach of Bolsonaro's defeat in the second round of elections in October 2022.

Among the actions enumerated by Moraes are included:

"...the extremely violent acts on the day of the inauguration of the elected president and vice-president, on December 12, 2022, with attempts including invasion of the Federal Police; ... the placement of a bomb that ended up not exploding, thank God, at the [Brasília] airport, on December 24, 2022."

The last "sequential acts" are the most critical:

• The "Punhal Verde e Amarelo" (Green and Yellow Dagger) Plan to assassinate elected President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party – PT), Vice-President Geraldo Alckmin, and Moraes himself, then president of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). The detailed plan for these executions "was printed out at the headquarters of the Brazilian government, at the same moment when President Jair Messias Bolsonaro was also there – and the Federal Police proved it," Moraes stated.

• The attempted execution of Moraes by Army Special Forces personnel on December 6, 2022, in the operation dubbed "Copa 2022" (Cup 2022).

• The elaboration of the so-called "Coup Minutes," which provided for the establishment of a state of exception to prevent the transfer of power to the newly elected government, and its discussion with the commanders of the three Armed Forces.

• The formation of a "crisis cabinet" under the command of Gen. Heleno and Gen. Braga Netto, to which power would be transferred after a military intervention.

• The attack on the headquarters of the three branches of government in Brasília on January 8, 2023, which, in the rapporteur's words, "was not spontaneous combustion, [but] the conclusion of a procedure for seizing and maintaining power at any cost."

The conviction of the former president and members of the military high command, including three four-star generals and a fleet admiral, is a historic event in Brazil. In a country that lived through two

decades under brutal military dictatorship, from 1964 to 1985, this is the first time that generals sat in the defendant's dock and that crimes against democracy were punished.

But this is not an event of merely national dimensions. The fascist offensive in Brazil is deeply linked to similar political processes developing in all parts of the world – from Latin America to Europe, but above all, in the United States.

The January 8, 2023 coup attempt in Brasília was a direct and inseparable continuation of the coup attempt led by Donald Trump on January 6, 2021 at Washington's Capitol.

Despite going unmentioned by the STF, there is an undeniable correlation between the beginning of the systematic coup conspiracy by Bolsonaro and his allies, at least since June 2021, and the explosive political events that preceded them in the United States.

Trump's fascist insurrection at the Capitol, defined by the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) as a watershed event in international politics, served as a political model for the attempt by Bolsonaro and his allies to set in motion a totalitarian project of power.

On January 10, 2021, in an article titled "Bolsonaro endorses Trump coup, threatens to do same in Brazil's 2022 election," the WSWS wrote: "[Bolsonaro] has already announced his intention to use the same lies about electoral fraud in Brazil to mobilize his supporters in a bid to remain in power, whatever the results of the 2022 presidential elections."

Reporting the presence of Eduardo Bolsonaro, the former president's son, in Washington during the January 6, 2021 events, the WSWS categorically concluded: "Eduardo did not go to the United States as a tourist. He was effectively summoned as an international observer of Trump's coup on behalf of Brazilian fascists."

The profound correlation between the political processes in the United States and Brazil also exposes the hypocrisy of the official triumphalist narrative regarding the conviction of Bolsonaro and his accomplices being promoted by the PT and the media.

The STF trial concluded with a speech by the court's president, Luís Roberto Barroso, stating: "I believe that we are ending the cycles of backwardness in Brazilian history, marked by coup-mongering and the breaking of constitutional legality."

This rosy narrative explodes in the face of the counteroffensive already underway to overturn the court's decision. A campaign for a "broad amnesty" for those convicted of carrying out attacks against democracy since 2019 has won the support of the majority of the right-wing dominated Brazilian Congress and its parties. On September 7, demonstrations held in support of Bolsonaro under the slogan "React, Brazil!" were attended by the governors of the country's three most powerful states.

The promoters of this campaign were strongly encouraged by the dissenting vote of Justice Luiz Fux, who not only refused to convict Bolsonaro but called for the annulment of the entire process, alleging the "absolute incompetence" of the STF to judge the case.

Bolsonaro's conviction has become, in fact, a battle horse for new attacks against Brazilian democracy by the same forces that promoted January 8, 2023.

The criminal intervention of US imperialism, in the context of its violent escalation against all of Latin America, is not a minor factor driving this process.

After imposing 50 percent tariffs, openly presented as a means of forcing the suppression of the proceedings against Bolsonaro, the Trump administration is doubling down on its criminal attacks against Brazil following the trial's conclusion.

On Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt declared that political intervention against Brazil "is a priority for the administration and the president is unafraid to use the economic might, the military might of the United States of America to protect free speech around the world."

The following day, Secretary of State Marco Rubio responded to Bolsonaro's conviction by declaring on X that "The United States will respond accordingly to this witch hunt."

Eduardo Bolsonaro, who moved permanently to the US earlier this year, responded even more aggressively. Hailing Leavitt's statement as a "very welcome" demonstration of "the Trump administration's willingness to defend the freedom agenda," he openly advocated for US military intervention against Brazil. "I think it's worth it for the sake of freedom. Would you accept slavery to avoid war? I want war," he stated.

"If the Brazilian regime consolidates itself and evolves in the same way as Venezuela... it may well be necessary in the future to bring in F-35 fighter jets and warships," Eduardo said, referring to the criminal escalation of Washington's imperialist aggression in the southern Caribbean.

The events during the two years that separate the fascist insurrection in Washington from its reenactment in Brasília demonstrate conclusively that the worldwide collapse of bourgeois democracy is an interconnected process. The swift advance of Trump's dictatorial project makes explicit, furthermore, that it is only intensifying.

"The excessively high tension of the international struggle and the class struggle results in the short circuit of the dictatorship, blowing out the fuses of democracy one after the other," wrote Leon Trotsky in 1929. He continued: "What is called the crisis of parliamentarism is the political expression of the crisis in the entire system of bourgeois society. Democracy stands or falls with capitalism."

The working class in Brazil, the United States and across the planet can only fight against fascism by waging a joint revolutionary struggle against capitalism and for socialism on an international basis.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact