

Lula government marks 3 years since Brazil's January 8 coup, as Trump intensifies offensive against Latin America

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On January 8, the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party – PT) held a ceremony to mark three years since the coup attempt led by his predecessor, the fascist former president Jair Bolsonaro with the support of Brazil's military chiefs.

The third anniversary of the January 8 fascist insurrection in Brasília was the first held since Bolsonaro and his military co-conspirators were convicted and jailed for their attempt to overturn the elections and establish a dictatorship.

It was also the first ceremony marking the event since the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, a close ally of Bolsonaro whose coup attempt on January 6, 2021, served as a model for the former Brazilian president.

Last July, the Trump administration imposed abusive 50 percent tariffs on Brazilian products with the open aim of reversing the imminent conviction of Bolsonaro and his allies, who were tried by Brazil's Supreme Court (STF) on September 11.

Since then, the Trump administration's offensive against the region US imperialism has historically considered its "backyard" has undergone a qualitative escalation.

In December, it launched its new National Defense Strategy, which introduced a "Trump corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine. Following its stated aims of challenging China's influence and asserting its domination over the Western Hemisphere, US imperialism launched its criminal invasion of Venezuela and kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, on January 3.

Held in this explosive context, Lula's ceremony aimed to sow illusions about the alleged strength of "Brazilian democracy." According to Lula, "January 8 is marked in history as the day of democracy's victory." The Brazilian president also took the opportunity to reinforce his government's nationalist agenda, claiming that January 8 also represented a victory over "the traitors to the homeland, who conspired against Brazil to cause chaos in the economy and unemployment for millions of Brazilians."

Lula praised the alleged virtues of the Supreme Court, saying that "Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the vigor of Brazilian democracy is the trial of the coup plotters by the STF." In a reference to the judge who presided over the case, Alexandre de Moraes, who was targeted by Trump under the Magnitsky Act, he said that the STF "did not bow to pressure. It was not intimidated by threats. It did not allow itself to be swayed by revenge."

In a calculated move, Lula failed to mention in his speech the enormous implications of the US invasion of Venezuela for Brazil's "vigorous democracy." The aggression of US imperialism against Brazil's northern neighbor sets a dangerous precedent for all Latin America. A central aim of Trump's attack was to send a clear message that any government that stands in the way of the United States will face the same fate as Maduro.

Neither did Lula mention the systematic interventions of the Trump administration in the politics of Brazil and the whole region promoting fascist forces that are heirs to the US-backed military dictatorships of the 1970s.

Lula and his administration have, in fact, done everything possible to avoid further straining relations with the Trump administration. The PT President continues to seek politically corrupt deals with the US administration to reverse the tariffs imposed on Brazil. In addition, since October, amid the Trump administration's escalation against Venezuela, Lula has spoken three times with the would-be American dictator, declaring in mid-December that "Trump became my friend with a little conversation."

But, as they act to consciously chloroform the Brazilian working class, Lula and his officials are nervously monitoring Maduro's kidnapping and the developments in Venezuela, conscious of their implications for Brazil, which are exacerbated by this being an election year in which Lula will run for re-election.

On January 6, the *Metrópoles* website reported that "the [Lula] government is concerned about the possibility of

White House interference in the 2026 presidential elections,” with Brazilian diplomats drawing “clear parallels between what has recently occurred in countries such as Honduras and Argentina and what may happen in Brazil.”

The fate of Nicolás Maduro foreshadows an escalation of direct intervention by US imperialism in Brazilian politics, which is aggressively advocated by the far-right opposition linked to Bolsonaro. These fascist forces have already begun to exploit the Trump administration’s offensive against Venezuela to boost their campaign for the release of Bolsonaro and the others convicted for the January 8 coup attempt.

As part of the official commemoration of the January 8 anniversary, Lula fully vetoed a bill to drastically reduce sentences for convicted antidemocratic conspirators, the so-called “Dosimetry Bill.” Approved by both houses of the Brazilian Congress in December, it aimed to reduce penalties for crimes such as “violent abolition of the democratic rule of law” and “coup d’état,” directly benefiting Bolsonaro and other imprisoned coup plotters.

The rapporteurs of the “Dosimetry Bill” in Congress harshly criticized Lula’s veto. Congressman Paulinho da Força—who is also the lifetime president of Brazil’s second largest trade union federation, Força Sindical—stated that “Congress handed Brazil’s white flag of peace to Lula. Do you know what he did? He tore it up and set it on fire.... He went to the already pacified terrain and threw gasoline on it. He preferred confrontation to dialogue.”

The congressman also linked the approval of the “Dosimetry Bill” with Brazil’s capacity to bring down Trump’s tariffs, claiming that the bill “has been recognized and praised internationally, including by the United States, as a clear sign of stability, democratic maturity, and pacification in the country.” Paulinho has already stated that Congress will overturn Lula’s veto.

Senator Esperidião Amin (Progressives) reacted to Lula’s veto with an even more incisive measure, filing a new bill on the same day, January 8, proposing “total, broad, and unrestricted amnesty” for Bolsonaro and others convicted of the January 8 coup attempt.

The “Dosimetry Bill” was approved by a wide margin in the Brazilian House of Representatives and Senate, indicating the active base in Brazil’s Congress and the bourgeois establishment as a whole working to rehabilitate Bolsonaro and support the candidate he backs in the October presidential election. Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, who is being launched as a presidential candidate in his father’s name, already appears at second place in the polls.

Undoubtedly, the attack on Venezuela and Trump’s offensive against Latin America will fuel the fascist opposition’s electoral ambitions and its active plans to

continue their 2022-23 dictatorial conspiracy.

Lula’s response to these developments is completely bankrupt. The daily *Folha de S. Paulo* reported on January 8 that his government is expected to “defend the president’s veto of reduced sentences for those convicted in the coup plot, but without straining the dispute to the point of compromising the executive branch’s relationship with Congress.”

Folha explained that “The president seeks to attract allies from different political camps to his reelection bid in October.” These include right-wing political forces that voted in favor of the “Dosimetry Bill” which Lula aims to incorporate in a revival of the “broad front” of the 2022 election against a candidate supported by Bolsonaro. This also means reinforcing his nationalist rhetoric and defense of “national sovereignty,” advanced to garner support from sectors of the Brazilian bourgeoisie affected by Trump’s tariffs.

The Lula government will face a growing crisis until the October 2026 general elections, which will coincide with the escalation of the Trump administration’s offensive against the region and the entire world. As shown throughout the history of Latin America in the 20th century, bourgeois nationalism is incapable of offering a progressive response to the crisis of US imperialism and its increasingly rapid turn toward dictatorship at home and war abroad.

On the contrary, Lula’s failed appeals to “multilateralism” and his defense of “national sovereignty” only disarm the Brazilian working class against the dangers it faces. The threat of imperialist intervention in Brazil and all of Latin America, including the imposition of a new military dictatorship, can only be stopped by an international movement of the working class against capitalism and its pillars, including the alleged parties of the nominal left such as Lula’s PT.



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