

Brazil's Largest Newspaper Accused of Journalistic Fraud



Sao Paulo, July 26 (RHC)-- Folha de Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest and most widely read newspaper, was accused of perpetuating journalistic fraud by grievously manipulating polling methodologies and manufacturing inaccurate headlines.

Investigative news outlet The Intercept, led by famed journalist Glen Greenwald, accused Folha of fraud after it ran a headline claiming that fifty percent of Brazilians wanted Michel Temer, head of the coup government in Brazil, to remain as president until 2018.

The results of the biased poll, carried out by Datafolha, were widely reprinted throughout the private Brazilian press, which has been very friendly to the coup government.

However, the poll immediately raised eyebrows in many circles, as it stood in contrast to previous surveys that indicated that Brazilians did not want Temer to remain in office.

The Intercept uncovered that the Folha deliberately manipulated the poll by asking questions in a distorted way, offering only two options to respondents; that either Temer or democratically elected President Dilma Rousseff serve out the remainder of the current presidential term.

The outlet spoke with Datafolha's Luciana Chong, who said that the paper determined the questions and also agreed that it would be inaccurate to claim that a majority of Brazilians wanted Temer to remain in office, as the question did not ask that.

Folha also claimed that only three percent of Brazilians wanted new elections, yet the Datafolha polling firm actually issued a press release giving a vastly different figure, stating 60 percent of the public wanted new elections.

Brazilian website Tijoloço then discovered the original version of Datafolha's data, which had been unpublished and then replaced with an updated version, included information about a question that specifically asked if Brazilians wanted new elections.

Folha had access to this raw polling data, which indicated that 62 percent wanted both Temer and Rousseff to resign and for new elections to be held.

Thus, the claims that only three percent wanted new elections and fifty percent of Brazilians wanted Temer to stay on as president were completely false and misleading. According to the polling firm's own data, a strong majority do not want Temer to remain yet the paper ran a headline claiming the opposite.

"Put simply, this is one of the most remarkable, flagrant, and serious cases of journalistic malfeasance one can imagine," read the article by The Intercept. The manipulation by Folha de Sao Paulo is being interpreted by Dilma Rousseff's supporters as yet another effort by the private media to prop up the coup government, despite its unpopularity.

Rousseff's supporters have accused private media outlets of helping facilitate the coup against the democratically elected government by drumming up opposition to Rousseff and the Workers Party.

The democratically elected Rousseff has not yet been permanently removed from her post, the Senate must still conduct a trial and then vote on her future. The efforts by Folha to distort public opinion are also seen as an effort to influence the impeachment vote in the Senate.

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