

Brazil's Bolsonaro seeks to grant police impunity over violence



Brasilia, January 5 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro urged Friday the urgent approval of a bill to protect police officers in the country from being prosecuted over crimes committed while on duty.

The far-right president, elected on a law-and-order platform, warned in a tweet that sky-high violence would only slow if laws were passed to provide police and soldiers freedom from prosecution when on active duty. "The legislative, executive and judicial powers have to make this commitment urgently," he tweeted.

Throughout the campaign, Bolsonaro said he wanted to give police and soldiers peace of mind while on often-violent operations, and he has also advocated broadening access to guns so people can defend themselves. Critics argue those ideas only risk inflaming Brazil's violent streets and worsening Brazil's murder tally -- nearly 64,000 people in 2017, a record.

His predecessor Michel Temer moved to militarize the city of Rio de Janeiro in an effort to combat crime and violence, a policy that backfired resulting in a major jump in street violence and saw hundreds of civilians killed.

Data released by the Institute of Public Security (ISP) Friday shows that citizen deaths directly related to the military intervention in the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro increased by 150 percent in the month of

August. It's a 150 percent jump, going from 70 deaths in August 2017 to a whopping 175 deaths last month.

Since his inauguration Tuesday, Bolsonaro has used executive orders to open up Brazil's economy, giving away the rights of Indigenous people to agribusiness, excluding the LGBTI community in Brazil from his government's human rights policies, opening up the country for U.S. troops and military bases, and vowing to join right-wing international efforts against progressive and leftist governments in the region such as Venezuela and Cuba.

In a TV interview on Thursday, Bolsonaro said he would be open to the possibility of the United States operating a military base in Brazil, a sharp shift in foreign policy.

Bolsonaro, a 63-year-old former Army captain and admirer of Brazil's military dictatorship of 1964 to 1985 and U.S. President Donald Trump, has quickly deepened ties with the United States and Israel.

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