

Brazil judges push back against Bolsonaro's election fraud claims

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Supporters of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro took part in a protest calling for a printed and auditable vote, in Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach on August 1 [Ricardo Moraes/Reuters]

Brasilia, August 3 (RHC)-- According to a group of 18 active and former Brazilian Supreme Court justices, the country's electoral system is free of fraud. The statement was issued amid unrelenting attacks by President Jair Bolsonaro, who is pushing for changes to the voting process.

Thousands of Bolsonaro's supporters rallied in several cities, including Rio de Janeiro and the capital Brasilia, to show support for the far-right leader's demand that paper receipts be printed after electronic ballots are cast in next year's presidential election.

Bolsonaro has said, without providing any evidence, that fraud marred the 2018 contest that he eventually won in a second round of voting. But critics say his claims are baseless. They say the president is bracing for defeat and plans to use his fraud claims as a means of fighting back against next year's election results, similar to former U.S. President Donald Trump, whom Bolsonaro has emulated.

In their statement on Monday, the judges said "Brazil has eliminated a history of election fraud," and that since the electronic voting system was adopted in 1996, there has never been a documented fraud case in any elections.

The judges said all the steps are monitored by political parties, prosecutors, federal police, universities, and the Brazilian Bar Association. "Eleven political parties have asked for proof of fraud in the past," Al Jazeera's Monica Yanakiew reported from Rio de Janeiro, adding that there is no proof to back up Bolsonaro's fraud claims.

"What they're saying is that [Bolsonaro is] trying to establish a narrative much like Donald Trump did in the United States that there will be fraud in next year's presidential election – and in case he loses, then he'll have a right to not accept the results," she said.

Bolsonaro has seen a recent drop in popularity amid corruption allegations that he denies, alleged irregularities in the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines from India, and a Senate probe into how his government has handled the COVID-19 crisis.

Thousands of Brazilians have protested in recent weeks to demand Bolsonaro's impeachment, something that a recent poll showed for the first time had the backing of a majority of people in the country.

Recent surveys also show the former army captain would lose to Brazil's former left-wing President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva in the elections should Lula choose to run.

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