

Brazil's Supreme Court orders removal of pro-Bolsonaro roadblocks



Supporters of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro block highway BR-251 during a protest against the election victory of his rival, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, in Planaltina, Brazil, on October 31, 2022 [Diego Vara/Reuters]

Brasilia, November 1 (RHC)-- Brazil's Supreme Court has ordered police to remove roadblocks erected by supporters of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who still has not publicly acknowledged his election defeat to left-wing rival Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Justice Alexandre de Moraes on Tuesday called on the Federal Highway Police to disperse the blockades, which were organised primarily by truckers, a key Bolsonaro constituency. The highway police said truckers had blocked highways at 271 points, partially or fully, as part of protests that have spread to 23 of Brazil's 26 states in the wake of Bolsonaro's loss to Lula in Sunday's election. The police force said another 192 roadblocks had been cleared.

Since Monday, protesters have blocked roads in major cities, including outside Sao Paulo's Guarulhos Airport, the country's main international air hub, as well as in Rio de Janeiro. A banner reading "Lula No!" hung off a bridge in Sao Paulo.

Tuesday's Supreme Court decision, which was backed by a majority on the 11-member court, ordered police to take "all measures" needed to free the roads. The ruling also set fines on highway police Director General Silvinei Vasques if he fails to clear the roadblocks. Vasques had come under fire for posting an Instagram story on Election Day urging Brazilians to vote for Bolsonaro.

The far-right leader, whose mantra was "God, family, country," had campaigned on his conservative values, including his opposition to legalised abortion and drugs while falsely warning that Lula's return would lead to the persecution of churches. Lula, who served as president from 2003 to 2010, had pledged to support working-class Brazilians and reinstate environmental protections, especially in the Amazon, after a surge of deforestation during Bolsonaro's administration.

Numerous international leaders have congratulated Lula on his victory, including US President Joe Biden, who in a call to the president-elect on Monday also "commended the strength of Brazilian democratic institutions following free, fair and credible elections."

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