

Brazil top court to investigate Bolsonaro role in anti-Lula riots



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Brasilia, January 14 (RHC)-- Brazil's Supreme Court has agreed to open an investigation into former President Jair Bolsonaro for allegedly encouraging anti-democratic protests that ended in the storming of government buildings by his supporters in the capital Brasilia.

Prosecutors will investigate Bolsonaro, who is in the United States, for possible “instigation and intellectual authorship of the anti-democratic acts that resulted in vandalism and violence in Brasilia last Sunday,” the top public prosecutor’s office said in a statement on Friday.

“Public figures who continue to cowardly conspire against democracy trying to establish a state of exception will be held accountable,” said Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who agreed on Friday to the request by federal prosecutors to launch the probe.

The Supreme Court had already ordered the arrest of Bolsonaro’s former justice minister, Anderson Torres, for allowing the protests to take place in the Brazilian capital after he assumed responsibility for Brasilia’s public security.

The federal district’s former governor and former military police chief are also targets of the Supreme Court investigation made public on Friday. Both were removed from their positions when thousands of Bolsonaro supporters vandalised the Supreme Court, Congress and presidential palace last weekend, seeking to provoke chaos and a military coup that would remove President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and restore the far-right Bolsonaro to power.

Having lost Brazil’s October election to Lula, Bolsonaro left Brazil for the U.S. on the eve of the end of his term, avoiding passing the presidential sash to his leftist rival at his inauguration. Torres, who like Bolsonaro is in Florida, has said he plans to return to Brazil to turn himself in. Bolsonaro said on social media he will move forward his return to Brazil.

Justice Minister Flavio Dino told a news conference he would wait until next week to re-evaluate Torres’s case, indicating a possible request for his extradition if the former minister does not turn himself in.

The arrest warrant against Torres was issued by de Moraes, who also removed Brasilia’s security chief from his post just hours after the rampage.

On Thursday, police found a draft decree in Torres’s house that appeared to be a proposal to interfere in the result of the election. Torres claimed the document was among others in a stack that was being thrown out. He said they were “leaked” to the Folha de S.Paulo newspaper in his absence to create a “false narrative.”

Dino said he has made no requests to the U.S. regarding Bolsonaro.

The political party to which Bolsonaro belongs, the right-wing Liberal Party (PL), decided to beef up its team of lawyers in preparation for the defence of the former president, a party official told Reuters.

Also on Friday night, the popular social media accounts of several prominent right-wing figures were suspended in Brazil in response to a court order, which US journalist Glenn Greenwald obtained and detailed on a live social media broadcast.

The order, also issued by Justice de Moraes, was directed at six social media platforms and established a two-hour deadline to block the accounts or face fines. The accounts belong to a digital influencer, a YouTuber recently elected federal legislator, a podcast host in the style of Joe Rogan and an evangelical pastor, among others.

Bolsonaro now faces several investigations for anti-democratic statements he made as president, including repeated claims the election system was open to fraud. PL party leaders fear he will be held responsible for Sunday’s storming of government buildings. While they do not think he will face arrest, they fear he could be declared ineligible to run in the 2026 election, the party official said.

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