

Brazilian court allows access to Bolsonaro allies' phone, bank records



Brasilia, June 18 (RHC)-- Brazil's top court has granted police permission to inspect financial and phone records of federal lawmakers allied with President Jair Bolsonaro as part of a probe into anti-democratic rallies, a source with direct knowledge of the ruling said.

Bolsonaro's supporters have taken to the streets almost weekly to challenge coronavirus lockdowns and call for military intervention to close Congress and the Supreme Court, which they see as obstacles to his agenda.

Bolsonaro, a former army captain and apologist for Brazil's 1964 military coup, has attended several of the demonstrations, but he is not a target of the federal police investigation. The ruling by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, involving private records of 11 lawmakers, came after Brazil's federal police raided the homes of 21 targets with search warrants for their alleged role in financing the rallies earlier in the day.

Among those targeted by the raids were Congressman Daniel Silveira and conservative blogger Allan dos Santos, both of them said on social media. Silveira and lawmakers Carla Zambelli and Bia Kicis were

among those whose records were unsealed, allowing police to comb through them, the source said. It was not entirely clear if all 11 lawmakers had all of their records unsealed.

In a statement, Zambelli's press office said she had not been told of the ruling, and were not even sure what case it could relate to. "If anyone expects to find anything that comprises me, they will have a big disappointment," she said in the statement.

Kicis' office said it, too, had not been informed of the court's decision. Reuters was not able to reach Silveira. Nonetheless, earlier on Tuesday, he wrote about the police raid. "Federal police in my apartment. I'm clearly making the old sphere of power uncomfortable," he said, adding that the accusations against him were "absurd."

The president's escalating confrontations with the Supreme Court come as Brazil suffers the world's worst COVID-19 outbreak outside the United States, which has killed over 44,000 people. Bolsonaro's handling of the health crisis has drawn criticism from health experts as he minimized the severity of the disease, sidelined specialists, and challenged social distancing orders from governors and mayors.

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