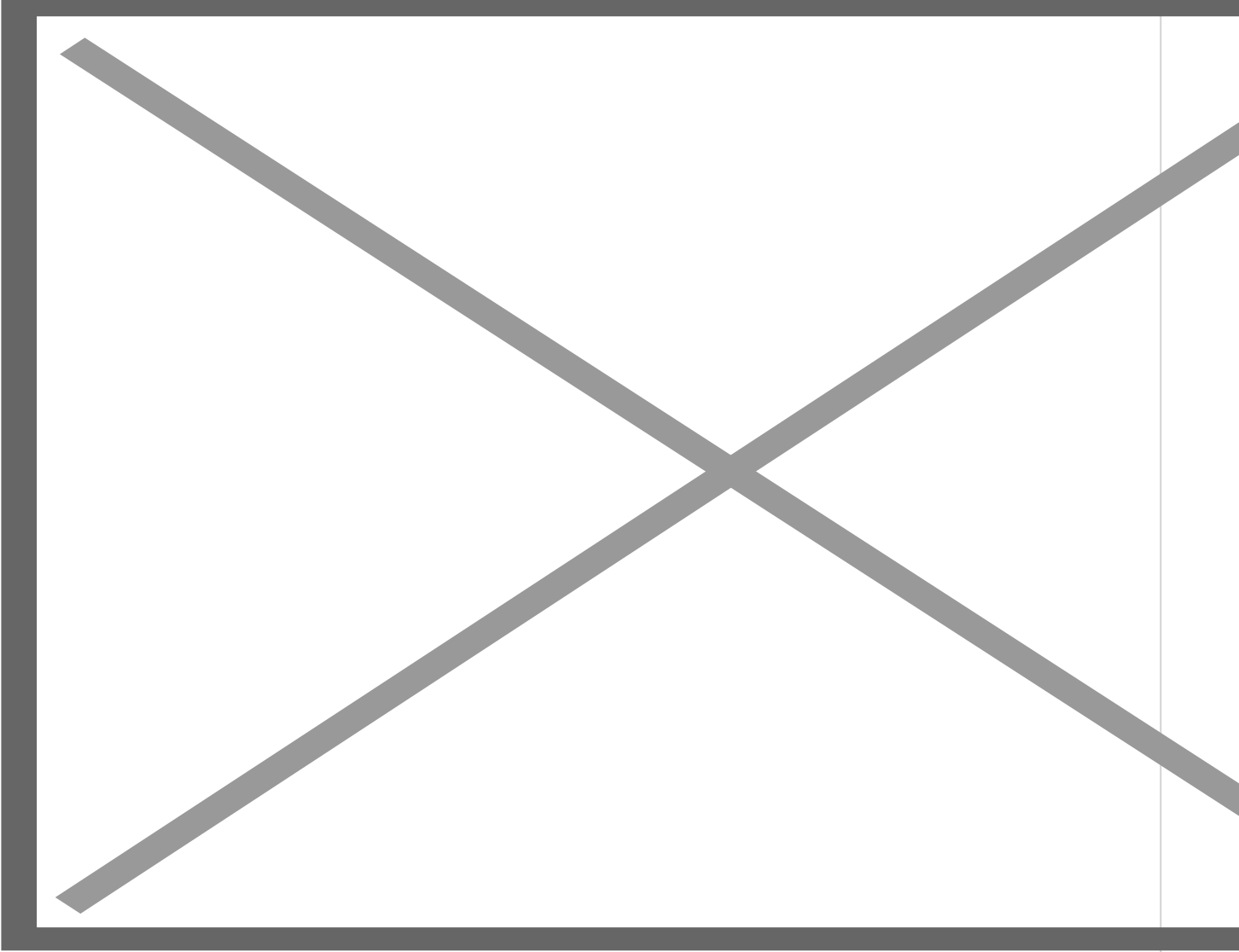


Brazilian lawmakers file for impeachment against President Bolsonaro

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Brasilia, April 1 (RHC)-- Opposition lawmakers in Brazil have called for President Jair Bolsonaro's removal from office to prevent his "coup-mongering" and "authoritarian delusions" from becoming reality. On Wednesday, lawmakers from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate, representing opposition parties, filed a new impeachment motion against Bolsonaro.

"We cannot be bystanders to this barbarism," said Congressman Marcelo Freixo, as legislators branded the president a "threat to democracy" and slammed him for what they called his illegal attempt to co-opt the armed forces.

The decision came after Bolsonaro fired the country's Defense Minister Gen Fernando Azevedo e Silva and after the subsequent resignation of the heads of the army, air force, and navy. The developments politically jolted the large South American country at a time when the government is already under pressure for mishandling the COVID-19 outbreak.

"There is an attempt here by the president to arrange a coup — it is underway already — and that is why we are reacting," said Alessandro Molon, the leader of the opposition in the lower house of the Brazilian congress, as the impeachment request was presented.

It was unclear what occurred between Brazil's far-right president and the military generals, who had helped bring him to power in 2018. Some Brazilian media outlets reported that the three generals stepped down in protest at Bolsonaro's sudden decision to replace Azevedo.

Brian Winter, a Brazil specialist and the editor-in-chief of Americas Quarterly, said that Bolsonaro had been trying to fill the top military positions with friendlier figures who might help protect him from impeachment or come to his rescue if he failed in his bid to win re-election next year.

The political turmoil comes as the government has a hard time controlling the spread of the coronavirus in Brazil. Nearly 320,000 people have so far died of COVID-19 in the country. Many hospitals have been pushed to the brink of collapse, with a record 3,780 deaths in the last 24 hours alone.

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