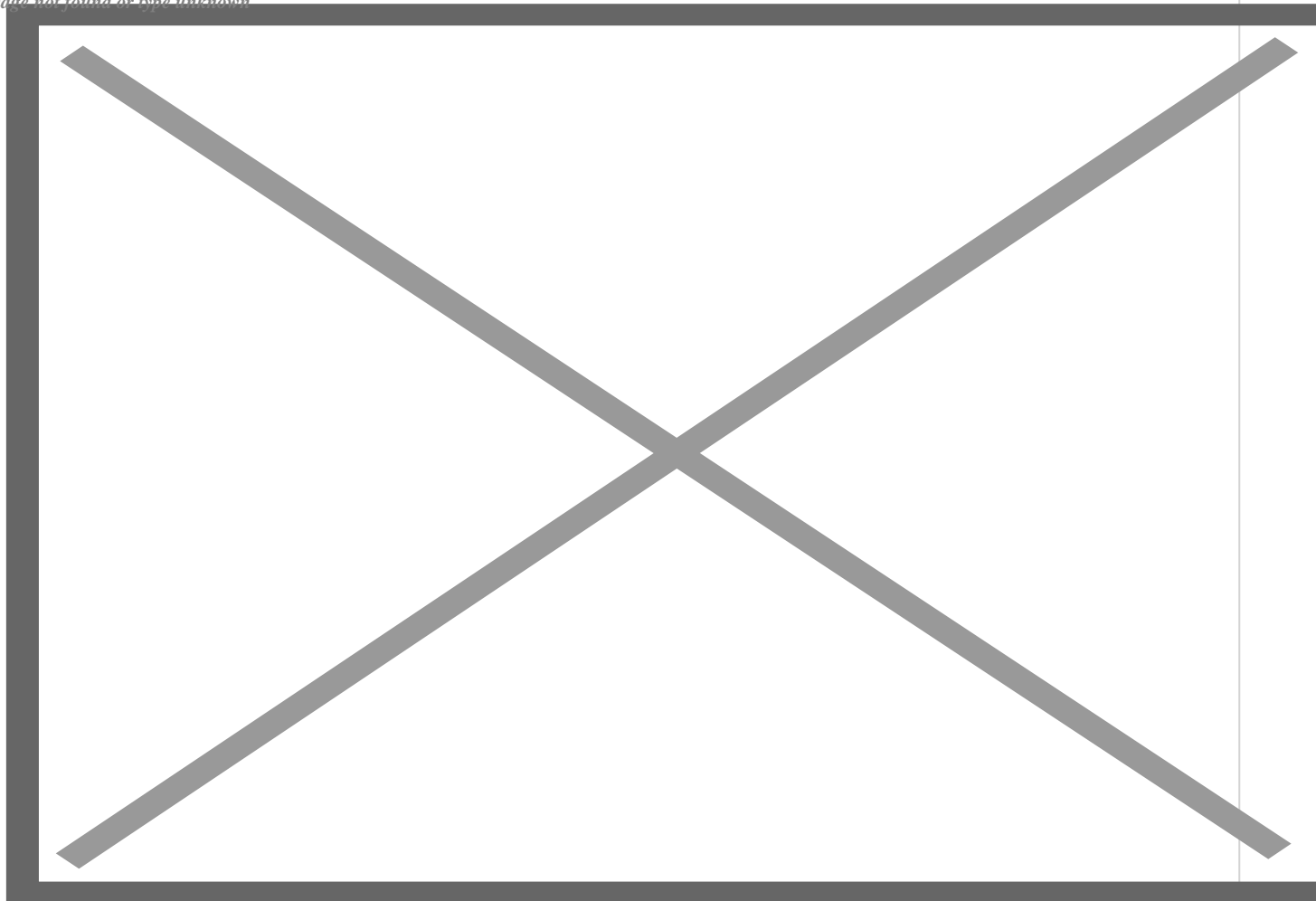


Lula da Silva is president-elect of Brazil

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?The candidate for the Workers' Party (PT), Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is the president-elect of Brazil after the ballot held this Sunday, according to the results issue??

Brasilia, October 30 (RHC)-- The candidate for the Workers' Party (PT), Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is the president-elect of Brazil after the ballot held this Sunday, according to the results issued by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). With almost 99 percent of the ballots counted, Lula obtained more than 50 percent of the votes cast.

According to the country's election authority, Lula garnered 50.8 percent of the vote compared with 49.2 percent for Bolsonaro on Sunday.

"First of all, I'd like to thank all the comrades that are here with me. We had a fight with the machine of the state, not just a candidate, who tried to block us from winning this election. For everyone who went to vote, I want to thank you," Lula told a large applauding crowd.

Bolsonaro had been leading throughout the first half of the vote count on Sunday and, as soon as Lula overtook him, cars in the streets of downtown Sao Paulo began honking their horns. People in the streets of Rio de Janeiro's Ipanema neighbourhood could be heard shouting, "It turned!"

"He's the best for the poor, especially in the countryside," said retired government worker Luiz Carlos Gomes, 65, who hails from Maranhao state in the poor northeast region. "We were always starving before him."

It was Brazil's most polarising election since its return to democracy in 1985 after a military dictatorship that Lula, a former union leader, has rallied against and Bolsonaro, a former army captain, invokes with nostalgia. Bolsonaro promised to consolidate a sharp rightward turn in Brazilian politics after a presidency that witnessed one of the world's deadliest outbreaks of COVID-19 in the pandemic and widespread deforestation in the Amazon basin.

Lula promised more social and environmental responsibility, recalling the rising prosperity of his 2003-2010 presidency.

Lula allies on Sunday said police had stopped buses carrying voters on highways even though the electoral authority had prohibited them from doing so. Brazilian media reported such operations were concentrated in the northeast, where Lula has the strongest support. "What happened today is criminal. There is no justification for the [police] to mount roadblocks on election day," Workers Party President Gleisi Hoffman told journalists.

However, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), which runs Brazil's elections, said no one had been prevented from voting and declined to extend voting hours. The Federal Highway Police said they had complied with court orders.

Bolsonaro's four years in office were marked by proclaimed conservatism and defence of traditional Christian values. He claimed his rival's return to power would usher in communism, legalised drugs, abortion and the persecution of churches — things that did not happen during Lula's earlier eight years in office.

Lula is credited with building an extensive social welfare programme during his previous tenure that helped lift tens of millions into the middle class, as well as presiding over an economic boom. He left office with an approval rating above 80 percent.

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