

Brazilians celebrate democracy one year after coup attempt

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Brasilia, January 8 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Lula da Silva leads a ceremony of "reaffirmation of democracy" on Monday, one year after an attempted coup promoted by far-right sympathizers of former President Jair Bolsonaro.

The event was held in the National Congress and brought together authorities from all branches of national and subnational authorities, as well as representatives of civil society.

On January 8, 2023, one week after Lula's inauguration, the headquarters of the Parliament, the Presidency, and the Supreme Court, located in the Three Powers Square in Brasilia, were vandalized by thousands of far-right activists who did not accept Bolsonaro's electoral defeat.

The judiciary considered it the "most brutal attack on Brazilian democracy" since the 1964 military coup and charged about 2,000 people for these actions, with around thirty already sentenced to prison terms of up to 17 years.

The January assault was, according to a parliamentary committee investigating the matter, the culmination of a coup attempt that began on October 30, 2022, when the results of the elections were known, with Lula defeating Bolsonaro by a margin of 1.8 percentage points.

Initially, there were dozens of roadblocks by truckers, and then thousands of Bolsonaro supporters set up camps in front of military barracks nationwide, demanding that the military prevent Lula from assuming the presidency.

Bolsonaro, who is being investigated by the judiciary as the mentor of this movement, also did not acknowledge his defeat at the polls. A day before Lula's inauguration, he traveled to the U.S. with the sole aim of not handing over power to the progressive leader, who took office on January 1 with strong popular support.

Eight days later, from the Bolsonaro camp in front of the Army Headquarters, the coup caravan departed, almost without police resistance, vandalizing the headquarters of the three branches and urging the military to overthrow Lula.

However, the Armed Forces did not respond. The reaction of all the country's institutions was firm and immediate, leaving the far right wounded and discredited. After these events, Lula focused on the reconstruction of the Brazilian democratic, strengthening state institutions, and recovering public policies abandoned by Bolsonaro during his tenure (2019-2022).

The far-right leader faced various legal processes throughout 2023, mostly still ongoing, including one that accuses him of being the "intellectual author" of the January 8th uprising. To date, there has only been one sentence in electoral court, suspending his political rights for eight years due to various irregularities during the 2022 campaign. Bolsonaro and the far right have denounced alleged mistreatment of those detained on January 8th.

They claim they were "patriots" who protested peacefully that day and fell into an ambush orchestrated by communist infiltrators and violent individuals, a theory completely debunked by the judiciary.

Nevertheless, a group of Bolsonaro-aligned lawmakers has declared that this January 8th will be the "day of scorn" and announced that they will not attend the ceremony at the Congress.

On social media, authorities have detected calls from far-right activists encouraging Brazilians to protest against Lula's "communist" government. The Justice Ministry, however, has clarified that it has not identified "anything serious" in these calls.

Nevertheless, on Monday, security will be reinforced in Brasilia, where around 3,000 agents were deployed, especially around the Three Powers Square, the scene of the violent attack on democracy on January 8, 2023.



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