

Brazil Civil Suit Aims to Ban Rouseff Rival Cunha for 10 Years



Brasilia, June 15 (RHC)-- In Brazil, the political future of suspended lower house speaker and impeachment mastermind Eduardo Cunha remains in limbo as prosecutors have called for a 10-year ban on the politician while a congressional ethics committee voted on whether to strip the opposition lawmaker's immunity for lying about secret Swiss bank accounts he used to launder bribes.

Brazilian prosecutors involved in investigations into corruption in the state oil firm Petrobras filed a civil lawsuit against Cunha and his wife on Monday, the Brazilian daily O Globo reported.

The lawsuit accuses Cunha of taking advantage of his elected position to “obtain illegal benefits” through a fraud scheme and seeks the return of some US\$5.7 million in public funds. The prosecutors also called for Cunha to be stripped of his political rights for the next 10 years.

Former Petrobras director Jorge Luiz Zelada, lobbyist for Cunha's PMDB party Joao Augusto Rezende Henriques, and Portuguese business mogul Idalecio Oliveira are also targets of the new lawsuit, according to O Globo.

Oliveira, revealed in the Panama Papers as the owner of a conglomerate of 14 companies registered in the British Virgin islands from 2003 to 2011, reportedly wired US\$10 million to a Swiss bank account held by Rezende Henriques in 2011. The PMDB lobbyist then wired US\$1.5 million to Cunha's Swiss account shortly after.

The transfer was one of more than over \$5 million USD Cunha is accused of hiding in Swiss accounts. Cunha, who has denied wrongdoing, called the civil lawsuit "absurd" in a statement and vowed to challenge it, O Globo reported. He also accused prosecutors of looking to "create facts" ahead of the decision in the congressional ethics committee on his conduct.

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