

Fighting back is the only way out of Bolsonaro's Brazil

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Brazil dominates Latin America's economy. And although the coup in Bolivia, uprisings in Chile, Ecuador, and Columbia, Trump's threats against Iran, Australian megafires, mass strikes in India and France, anti-government protests in Lebanon, and the British elections have pushed Brazil off the front of the international pages, what happens in Brazil will go a long way to determining the social and politic balance of power in Latin America in the coming period. In just one year, far-right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has done a lot of damage. The Amazon rain forest is burning, social services, education, culture, women's rights, and unions are under attack. Bolsonaro and his followers have given the green light to the murder of indigenous activists, they have threatened LGTBQ people and elected officials, their fingerprints are all over the assassination of Party of Socialism and Freedom Rio de Janeiro city councilor Marielle France, and they have launched a campaign against "cultural Marxism." Yet, despite legitimate fears, Bolsonaro has not managed to consolidate a neo-fascist party, his administration is enmeshed in growing corruptions scandals, and the judiciary was forced to release former Workers Party (PT) president Lula in October, who stands as a unique electoral threat to Bolsonaro's reelection in 2022.

Esquerda Online is a widely-read political site in Brazil associated with Resistência, a revolutionary socialist current within the Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL). The following editorial outlines strategic perspectives for fighting Bolsonaro and mobilizing Brazil's still-powerful labor, feminist, Afro-Brazilian, indigenous, youth, and poor people's movements. Originally published at Esquerda Online, translated by No Borders News.

It is common to joke that in Brazil the year begins after Carnival (the last week of February this year), our biggest festival of popular culture, marked by irreverence and political satire. But in these times of Bolsonarism we cannot afford to lose any time. And this new year, in particular, Brazil's exploited and oppressed must confront unprecedented challenges. We want to point out three themes around which we believe the Brazilian left must focus its attention, themes which demand social mobilization and unity.

Attacks on democratic freedoms

One of the most sensitive issues in the current Brazilian political scenario is that of democratic freedoms. We must be rigorous in our analysis: in Brazil, we no longer live in a liberal democracy, but neither do we live in a dictatorship. At the same time, the direction is clear, we are experiencing

an authoritarian escalation in the country.

Bolsonarism's strategic project is the eradication of Brazil's democratic regime. However, it does not yet enjoy majority support among the different fractions of the bourgeoisie, nor of their representatives in parliament. Although there is a powerful unity among the ruling class around neoliberalism, there is, as yet, no such consensus for the installation of an openly authoritarian regime.

The year began with the scandalous decision of a judge in Rio de Janeiro authorizing censorship against the producer of the popular and irreverent Porta dos Fundos program that recently produced a "gay Jesus" film for Netflix. Fortunately, the Supreme Court reversed the magistrate's decision. Yet, if threats of censorship were not enough, the headquarters of the production company Porta dos Fundos came under attack by fascists on December 24. To date, only one of the criminals has been identified and, after he was issued a judicial warning and released from custody, he left the country. Nobody has been arrested.

Unemployment and privatizations

Unemployment is one of the biggest social wounds in Brazil today. The year ended with more than 12.5 million unemployed. Another 4.6 million people are discouraged and have given up looking for work.

Neoliberal measures sold as necessary reforms to make the economy grow and modernize labor relations were mere deceit. Only the big businessmen, bankers, and international moneylenders won while workers' protection and retirement are under attack.

At the start of 2020, the official line is that only by privatizing the Petrobrás state oil company, Banco do Brasil, and Caixa Econômica Federal (the largest state-owned financial institution in Latin America) will the country grow again and generate jobs. But this is just another lie from Minister of Finance Paulo Guedes and Bolsonaro to deliver our national wealth into the capitalists' eager hands.

Subservience to US imperialism

Brazilian diplomacy is in shambles. Bolsonarism destroyed important assumptions within the Foreign Ministry that guaranteed Brazil's international policy not be linked to the United States on many issues. One such recent example was Brazil's United Nations vote against a resolution condemning the criminal and inhuman U.S. economic blockade against Cuba. The only countries that voted with the U.S. were Brazil and Israel.

In 2020, Brazil's tethering to American interests is growing tighter. For instance, in the confrontation between the U.S. and Iran after the assassination of General Soleimani, Brazilian diplomats sympathized with the U.S., referred to Iran as a terrorist state, and failed to condemn the death of the Iranian military leader. President Bolsonaro even declared that Soleimani was not a general.

Fighting back is the only way out

It is wrong to think this new year will be easy. Year II of Bolsonarism promises many attacks on democratic and social rights and our national sovereignty. On the other hand, we can, and must, place our bets Brazilian workers' capacity to resist. When hundreds of thousands of teachers, education workers, and students struck in May and June of 2019 creating what we called an Education Tsunami, we managed to prevent attacks by Bolsonarism against public universities and federal education institutes.

And we need only look to the intense mobilization in France as an example, where a long and decisive general strike in public transportation has pushed the government back from its plans to raise the minimum retirement age. French workers are providing an important example to inspire the Brazilian working class, building resistance to Bolsonaro's attacks is the only way out.

Reposted from the translated post at No Borders.