

Brazilian president slashes minimum wage with Executive Order



Brasilia, January 4 (RHC)-- Brazil's new far-right President Jair Bolsonaro has lowered the minimum wage. In one of his first acts as president, he signed a decree that sets the minimum wage to 998 Brazilian reais (approximately \$257) from 1,006 Brazilian reais (around \$267) as estimated by former President Michel Temer. According to reports, this action will be transitory as it has to be approved by the Congress within the next 60 days.

Taking the helm of their ministries Wednesday, Bolsonaro's cabinet unveiled sweeping plans to step up privatization, toughen prison sentencing guidelines, and hand control over Indigenous land to the Agriculture Ministry.

While Bolsonaro lowered the minimum wage, his Finance Minister, Chicago Boy Paulo Guedes, said he planned to cut Brazil's tax to 20 percent of gross domestic product from 36 percent and reduce the state's role, which means more economic liberalization and cuts in the welfare system.

Guedes also said that pensions are the pressing issue in Brazil. "If we have solid pension reform, we will get 10 years of growth," he said.

Former army captain Bolsonaro, whose election in October marked the rise of the far-right in Brazil, took office Tuesday saying he would free Latin America's largest nation from "socialism and political correctness."

Immediately after taking office, Bolsonaro signed an executive order removing policies aimed at protecting LGBTI rights in the country as part of his newly-elected government. The new Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights of Bolsonaro's administration will not have the mandate to protect LGBTI community.

He also issued an executive order Wednesday making the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for deciding on lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples. The move will allow vested interests to exploit the Indigenous population and bring environmental disaster to its Amazon region.

One political observer noted that the new Brazilian president is not wasting any time in putting the country on the road to fascism.

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