

Brazilian president insists that racism is rare in his country



Brasilia, May 9 (RHC)-- According to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, racism is an insignificant problem in Brazil. Yet political observers say that Bolsonaro himself has a long history of not just racist but also homophobic and sexist comments in the past.

Bolsonaro spoke to Rede TV in an interview in which he defended his record on a number of controversial subjects. "Racism is rare in Brazil. I'm fed up with this mania of always pitting blacks against whites, gays against heterosexuals," Bolsonaro said in an interview with celebrity presenter Luciana Gimenez, best known for having had a son with British pop icon Mick Jagger.

With such a record of racism, homophobia, fascism, xenophobia, he added, "I should not have even been elected as a municipal councilor. The people understood that an innocent man was being shot at."

In demonstrating his supposed non-racist credentials, ex-army captain Bolsonaro pointed to an incident in 1978 when he saved a drowning soldier "who happened to be Black." He said: "Now if I were a racist, what would I have done on seeing a Black fall into the water? I'd have folded my arms," said Bolsonaro, who has appointed not one Black person in his government. In Brazil, 54 percent of the population is either Black or mixed race.

Once, following a visit to a settlement of African slave descendants called a "quilombo," Bolsonaro suggested they were all overweight and said: "They don't do anything. They're no use even to procreate."

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