

Brazilian president picks supporters of military dictatorship to probe deaths and disappearances



Brasilia, August 5 (RHC)-- The Brazilian Socialism and Liberty Party's (Psol) elected members at the House of Representatives have spoken out against the new appointments by far-right President Jair Bolsonaro to the Commission of Political Dead and Missing (CEMDP).

The opposition lawmakers sent a delegation to the Attorney General's office, denouncing the appointment of pro-military regime people to head a committee to investigate the disappeared and dead.

Bolsonaro appointed Marco Vinicius Pereira de Carvalho, who serves as Special advisor to the Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights Damara's Alves; Army Reserve Colonel Weslei Antonio Maretti; the federal deputy Filipe Barros (PSL-PR); and Vital Lima Santos, who works at the Ministry of Defense office.

Barros is pro-military regime who celebrated the anniversary of the 1964 military coup. He referred to the coup 55 years ago as “the day that Brazil was saved from the communist dictatorship.” He also called criticism of military regime’s torture and deaths “revisionism” and he recently demanded the arrest of journalist Glenn Greenwald whose reporting exposed the Justice Minister Sergio Moro’s interference in the Lava Jato case to falsely implicate former President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva in a corruption case.

Colonel Maretti, another appointee, often remembers Colonel Brilhante Ustra who is known for torture during the military regime. He has even stated that “those with automatic weapons need not give much explanation.”

Bolsonaro dismissed a number of lawmakers to appoint his people. Those removed from the committee were: the president of the board, state prosecutor Eugenia Augusta Gonzaga Faver; lawyer and professor at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) Rosa Maria Cardoso da Cunha; the federal lawmaker from Workers’ Party (PT) Paulo Pimenta; and Joao Batista da Silva Fagundes, former federal lawmaker for the state of Roraima.

The Psol said the new appointments were retaliation against recent findings of the CEMDP. A week before the appointments, CEMDP acknowledged the death of Fernando Santa Cruz, father of the current national president of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), Felipe Santa Cruz, as “unnatural, violent, caused by the Brazilian state” during the military dictatorship.

Following the report, Bolsonaro said he could “tell him how his father disappeared” but “he won’t want to hear the truth” while questioning CEMDP’s version of events. Paulo Pimenta, a lawmaker from PT, said he was not surprised by his dismissal while slamming Bolsonaro’s appointment of pro-military regime people as the head of the commission.

“It is abominable, a fierce, a disrespect, an affront to the Brazilian people and our entire history. Do you imagine what the situation would be like if, in Chile, a commission to investigate everything that happened to the dead and missing of the Chilean dictatorship was made up of people who are sympathizers of the Pinochet government,” said Pimenta.

Ivan Valente, leader of Psol said that Bolsonaro is trying to rewrite the history of “a dictatorship that lasted for 21 years with murders, disappearances, torture, censorship” and “what he wants to do is deny it all.”

The CEMDP was created in 1995 to help locate bodies of victims of the military dictatorship. The commission was made by law which keeps it under “state policy, not the government” according to Psol. Hence the new appointments are administrative misconduct, abuse of power, and misuse of purpose by Bolsonaro.

“He can’t nominate people to a committee researching for 25 years where the dead and missing are, who will exactly deny that there were political deaths and disappearances, that faced repression, that faced torture,” said Valente.

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