

Brazilian Supreme Court takes down Bolsonaro's secret budget

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Brazil's Supreme Court Judge Rosa Weber, Dec. 19, 2022. | Photo: Twitter/ @SergioAJBarrett

Brasilia, December 20 (RHC)-- The Brazilian Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional the so-called 'Secret Budget' through which right-wing lawmakers have allocated public funds since President Jair Bolsonaro came to power in January 2019.

The Court's decision emerged as a result of complaints according to which the Bolsonaro administration used this parliamentary procedure to attract the support of lawmakers by assigning budget items without respecting technical criteria.

The "Secret Budget" allowed the allocation of large budgetary resources in a way that was difficult to oversee, Supreme Court President Rosa Weber said. During the trial, the Bolsonaro administration expressed its support for this mechanism, despite the fact that social organizations that defend transparency in governance had stated that the secret budget favored corruption.

While budget preparation is mainly a responsibility of the Executive Power, a part of federal public resources has remained reserved for "parliamentary amendments", which are raised by lawmakers in a discretionary manner.

In 2019, conservative lawmakers modified the way these items were distributed so that citizens could not track the benefited parliamentarians or the destination of the money. Since then, Brazilian journalists have been investigating parliamentary amendments in which they found evidence of overpricing and "phantom" purchases.

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