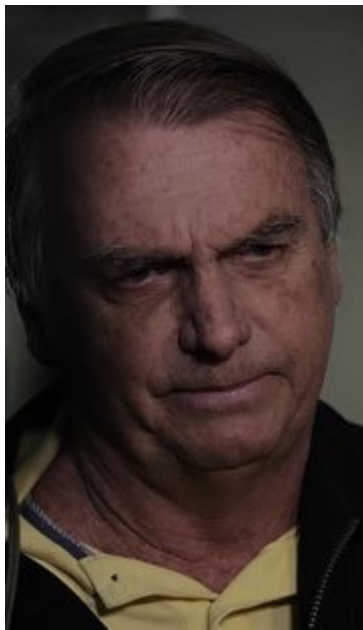


Jair Bolsonaro barred from holding public office in Brazil until 2030



Brasilia, July 2 (RHC)-- Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has been barred from seeking public office for eight years, after a federal court found that he made baseless claims about the country's voting system and abused the power of his office.

In a ruling on Friday, Brazil's Superior Electoral Court found that Bolsonaro had violated election laws in the lead-up to the October 2022 race, while he was still president. Judges cited an incident last year in which he summoned foreign diplomats to warn them about alleged vulnerabilities in the country's electronic voting system, asserting his claims were "lies and misinformation."

One of the five judges to rule against the ex-president, Benedito Goncalves, condemned Bolsonaro for "appalling lies" and "deceitful" statements, which he said were intended to "arouse a state of collective paranoia" among voters.

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Bolsonaro's lawyers acknowledged the then-president was "excessively blunt" during the meeting with diplomats, but said he was merely working to "improve" the country's voting system. He later protested

Friday's verdict, telling reporters he had been "stabbed in the back."

Two of Bolsonaro's sons, both of whom are also politicians, took to social media to decry the decision, with Eduardo Bolsonaro arguing that his father became a "priority target of the establishment" due to his conservative values. His eldest son Flavio declared a "moral victory," claiming it was "clear to all Brazilians that he is a good person."

After losing last year's election to Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Bolsonaro went on to insist that the race was stolen from him, claiming that a "malfunction" had affected thousands of electronic voting machines. His supporters also took to the streets for heated protests, erecting barricades on highways and storming Brazil's presidential palace on January 8, just one week after Lula's inauguration. Lula himself has accused Bolsonaro of attempting to launch a coup.

Bolsonaro later called for an end to the unrest and conceded defeat, while his assertions were ultimately shot down in the courts, with judges hitting him with a \$4.3 million fine for challenging the election results in "bad faith." He currently faces a separate criminal probe over allegations he purposely incited the January 8 incident.

President Lula, who previously served between 2003 and 2010, was also barred from challenging Bolsonaro in the 2018 due to a conviction on corruption charges. Lula was released from custody in 2019 when Brazil's Supreme Court overturned the verdict, finding that the judge who convicted him had lacked proper jurisdiction. Supporters of the leftist leader continue to argue that the corruption case was politically motivated.

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