

Brazilian Court Targets Eight Temer Ministers, Dozens of Other Politicians in Corruption Probe



Brasilia, April 13 (RHC)-- A Brazilian Supreme Court judge has opened investigations into almost 100 politicians who allegedly were part of the largest corruption scheme in the country, including a number of top allies of unelected President Michel Temer.

Eight ministers -- which represents nearly one third of the president's cabinet -- 29 senators of the 81 in the Senate, 40 lawmakers out of the 513 from the lower house, twelve governors and five former presidents have been accused of being part of the scheme around bribery in the state-run oil company Petrobras.

The list of names was released this week as part of the investigation by Justice Edson Fachin, based on the testimony of top executives in Brazil's largest construction conglomerate, Odebrecht, which has been at the center of corruption scandals and found guilty of running an international bribery network.

"The political crisis will deepen and we risk an institutional paralysis because the entire Brazilian political system is under question," said senator Jorge Viana, who is also under investigation.

As part of plea bargain deal for 77 Odebrecht employees who have admitted to paying millions of dollars in bribes, the officials agreed to present a list of politicians connected to the scheme in order to reduce their own sentences.

The list of names includes a number of Temer's closest allies, including Presidential Chief of Staff Eliseu Padilha, Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes, Agriculture Minister Blairo Maggi and Minister Wellington Moreira Franco, who heads a department for infrastructure investment.

The head of the Senate, Eunício Oliveira, and the head of the lower house, Rodrigo Maia, have also been named.

"The truth will prevail. Brazilian justice has the maturity and firmness to investigate and distinguish truth from lies and alternative versions," said Eunício Oliveira.

The release of the list comes as Temer's government continues to face criticism and protests over its neoliberal austerity measures and the country's economic hardships.

President Temer said he would only temporarily suspend his ministers if these requests for investigation become legal processes and will only force them to resign if the Supreme Court initiates a trial.

The list also includes a request to investigate five former presidents, including Fernando Collor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, José Sarney, Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva and Dilma Rousseff.

Despite the fact that Temer's allies painted the impeachment process against Dilma Rousseff — widely condemned as a parliamentary coup — as a bid to root out government corruption, leaked wiretap recordings revealed that the ouster had more to do with protecting corruption than prosecuting it. Nevertheless, the investigations have marched forward, and fraud allegations have swirled around Temer and his government since being installed in office last year.

The country's core anti-corruption investigations probing bribery schemes in Petrobras, known as Operation Car Wash, have put dozens of politicians and business elite on trial and even behind bars.

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