

Cuba Expresses Full Support and Solidarity with Lula



Havana, January 25 (RHC)—Cuba has expressed its full support and solidarity with former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva, after an appeals court upheld a lower court’s conviction over alleged corruption and money laundering.

In a statement, the island’s Foreign Ministry warned that Lula is a target of a most ferocious political and judicial witch-hunt to stop him from running in October’s general elections.

Opinion polls suggest the former leader would win the elections comfortably.

The court's verdict was delivered on Wednesday in the southern city of Porto Alegre, where thousands of Lula da Silva's supporters gathered with signs bearing the slogan "Elections without Lula is fraud."

The court found Lula da Silva guilty of accepting a luxury apartment and refurbishments worth more than 1 million dollars as a bribe, to help secure lucrative contracts for construction firm OAS with Brazil's state oil giant Petrobras.

He was sentenced to nearly 10 years in prison for corruption and money-laundering last year, but remained free on appeal.

Lula da Silva's legal team said no material evidence has been presented to prove the apartment in question was his, and the conviction is merely based on testimony of Leo Pinheiro, OAS president, who received a shorter sentence for plea bargaining.

His lawyers said they will continue to appeal Wednesday's verdict.

Lula da Silva has said he plans to carry on travelling the country campaigning, regardless of the ruling.

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