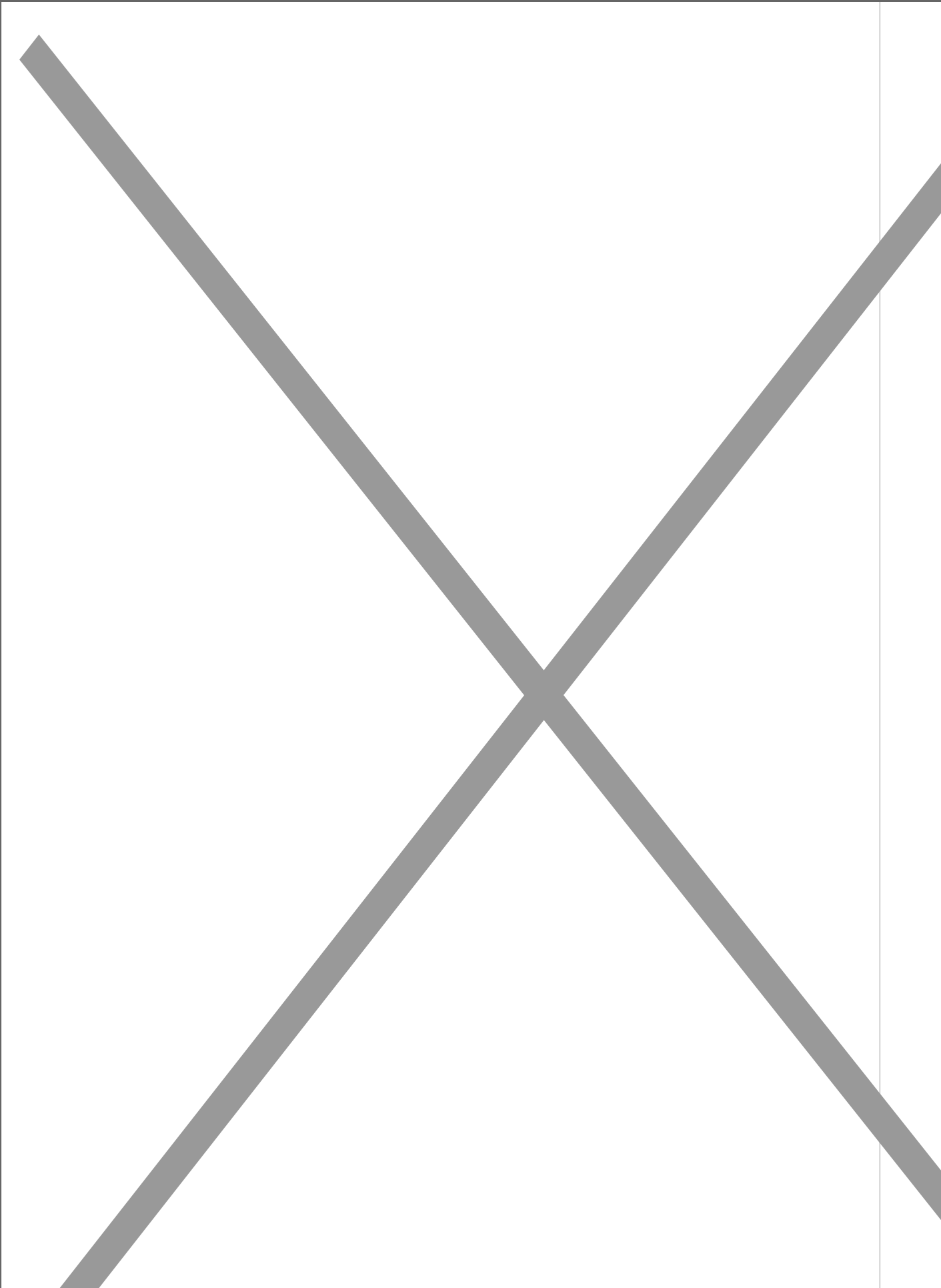


Brazil's top court throws out convictions against Lula

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Top Brazilian court throws out convictions of Lula??

Brasilia, April 16 (RHC)-- Brazil's Supreme Court has upheld a ruling annulling the corruption convictions of former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, clearing the way for him to run for a new presidential term next year against incumbent Jair Bolsonaro.

The majority decision, which was widely expected, came on Thursday after Supreme Court Justice Edson Fachin determined in early March that the lower federal court where Lula was tried lacked jurisdiction; a ruling that was quickly appealed by Brazil's top prosecutor.

The ruling does not find Lula innocent but in effect places prosecutors back at square one by sending the cases to a different court. The quashing of Lula's convictions -- albeit on procedural grounds -- has upended Brazilian politics as far-right President Jair Bolsonaro gears up to seek re-election as the COVID-19 pandemic ravages Latin America's biggest country.

Bolsonaro has described a virus that has killed more than 365,000 Brazilians, the world's second-highest death toll, as a "little flu." After Fachin's ruling, Lula described Bolsonaro's approach to the pandemic as "imbecilic" and likened the situation to a genocide.

Lula's attorneys called the judges' decision "historic." "This is another Supreme Court ruling that reestablishes the credibility of the justice system in our country," they said in a statement.

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