

# Bolsonaro backers ransack Brazil presidential palace, Congress

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**The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk:** Supporters of Brazil's far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro on Sunday invaded the country's Congress, presidential palace and Supreme Court in Brasilia, in a grim echo of the US Capitol invasion almost exactly two years ago by fans of former President Donald Trump. The sight of thousands of yellow-and-green clad protesters wreaking havoc in the capital capped months of tension following the most fraught election for a generation. Bolsonaro, who lost the Oct 30 vote to leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, peddled the false claim that Brazil's electronic voting system was prone to fraud, spawning a violent movement of election deniers, reports Reuters.

The invasion poses an immediate problem for Lula, who was only inaugurated on Jan. 1 and has pledged to unite a nation torn by Bolsonaro's nationalist populism. Television images showed protesters breaking into the Supreme Court and Congress, chanting slogans and smashing furniture. Local media estimated about 3,000 people were involved. Lula was far from the capital, on an official trip to Sao Paulo state. Bolsonaro, who has barely spoken in public since losing the election, left Brazil for Florida 48 hours before the end of his mandate and was absent from Lula's inauguration.

The violent scenes in Brasilia could amplify the legal risks to Bolsonaro, who has so far not commented on the invasions. The Bolsonaro family lawyer, Frederick Wassef, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Supreme Court was ransacked by the occupiers, according to social media images that showed protesters shattering the windows of the modernist building. A policeman on horseback was surrounded by shouting demonstrators armed with sticks who knocked him off his mount. Lula's Workers Party asked the office of the nation's top public prosecutor to order public security forces to contain the demonstrators.

Brasilia Governor Ibaneis Rocha told Reuters that all security forces had been deployed to confront the rioters. "Violence has no place in a democracy," Douglas Koneff, the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Brasilia, wrote on Twitter. "We strongly condemn the attacks on the institutions of the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary Powers in Brasilia, which is also an attack on democracy. There is no justification for these acts!" The U.S. Embassy in Brasilia, in a tweet, said "U.S. citizens are warned to avoid the area until further notice." On Saturday, with rumors of a confrontation brewing, Justice Minister Flávio Dino authorized the deployment of the National Public Security Force. On Sunday, he wrote on Twitter, "this absurd attempt to impose the will by force will not prevail."

Latin American leaders were quick to condemn the scenes. "All my solidarity with Lula and the people of Brazil," Colombian President Gustavo Petro tweeted. "Fascism decides to conduct a coup." Chilean President Gabriel Boric said Lula's government has his full support "in the face of this cowardly and vile attack on democracy." In Washington in 2021, Trump supporters attacked police, broke through barricades and stormed the Capitol in a failed effort to prevent congressional certification of Joe Biden's 2020 election victory. Trump, who has announced a third bid for the presidency, in 2024, had pressured his vice president, Mike Pence, not to certify the vote, and he continues to claim falsely that the 2020 election was stolen from him through widespread fraud. In Brasilia there have been at least three accounts of protesters assaulting journalists, according to the Brasilia journalists' union, citing unconfirmed reports.