



By: TA | AP Insight

Brazil's former President Bolsonaro begins 27-year prison sentence for coup attempt



Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday started his 27-year prison sentence for leading a coup attempt, to the surprise of many in the South American nation who doubted he would ever end up behind bars.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has overseen the case, ruled Bolsonaro will remain in custody after being **preemptively arrested** on Saturday.

Supporters and detractors of the embattled leader have gathered outside the federal police headquarters since the order was issued, some calling for Bolsonaro's release and others toasting to his imprisonment.

The far-right leader had been under house arrest since August and was taken in on Saturday after trying to break his ankle monitor. Bolsonaro blamed "**hallucinations**", a claim that de Moraes dismissed in his preemptive arrest order.

Bolsonaro will not have any contact with the few other inmates at the federal police headquarters. His 12-square-meter room has a bed, a private bathroom, air conditioning, a TV set and a desk, according to federal police.

De Moraes determined on Tuesday that Bolsonaro's defense had exhausted all appeals of his conviction. His lawyers disagree and promise to keep filing requests for house arrest due to the former leader's poor health. The Supreme Court justice has already ruled against it.

"There is no legal possibility of any other appeal," de Moraes said in his decision.

Brazil's criminal law also could have allowed the 70-year-old to be transferred to a local penitentiary or to a prison room in a military facility in the capital Brasilia.

The former president and several of his allies were convicted by a panel of Supreme Court justices for attempting to overthrow **Brazil's democracy** following his 2022 election defeat.

The plot included plans to kill President Luiz

Inácio Lula da Silva, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and Justice de Moraes. The plan also involved encouraging an insurrection in early 2023.

The former president was also found guilty of charges including leading an armed criminal organization and attempting the violent abolition of the democratic rule of law.

Bolsonaro has always denied wrongdoing.

Champagne and tears

Outside the federal police building, about a dozen Bolsonaro supporters dressed in yellow and green of the Brazilian flag cried foul and asked Congress to pass a bill to give the former president and his allies some kind of amnesty.

"I am outraged. This is the best president of my life, my friend. This is a great injustice," said Eliane Leandro, 61, a hard core Bolsonaro supporter who says she will come to the federal police headquarters every day until he is released. "I hate you, Alexandre de Moraes. You deserve hell."

Today we can breath and continue fighting for our democracy - Keit Lima

Sao Paulo city councilor Keit Lima, 34, had very different feelings. She brought champagne and shared it with other Black women who had come from a march in Brasilia to celebrate Bolsonaro's imprisonment.

"Today we can breath and continue fighting for our democracy," Lima said. "Our democracy is young, but we want it to live long."

Other convictions

Two others convicted, Augusto Heleno and Paulo Sérgio Nogueira, both Army generals,

were sent to a military facility in Brasilia to start serving their sentences.

Former Justice Minister Anderson Torres is now imprisoned at the Papuda penitentiary, also in Brazil's capital.

Adm. Almir Garnier will serve his term at Navy facilities in Brasilia.

Bolsonaro remains a key figure in Brazilian politics

Bolsonaro's running mate and former Defense Minister Walter Braga Netto, another army general, will remain in prison at a military facility in Rio de Janeiro.

De Moraes also confirmed that lawmaker and former head of Brazil's intelligence agency Alexandre Ramagem is on the loose in the United States.

Bolsonaro remains a key figure in Brazilian politics, despite being ineligible to **run for office** until at least until 2030 after a separate ruling by Brazil's top electoral court.

The first day of his prison sentence should mark an extension of that deadline to 2033.

Polls show he would be a competitive candidate in next year's vote if allowed to run.

US tensions

The former president is an ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has called the trial of the former Brazilian leader a "witch hunt."

Bolsonaro was mentioned in a July order by the U.S. administration to raise tariffs on several Brazilian exports by 50%.



Lula's popularity was boosted by the perception that he was defending Brazilian sovereignty

Relations between the two countries have improved since, with Lula and Trump meeting in Malaysia at the ASEAN summit in October. Most of those higher tariffs have been dropped.

The U.S. also imposed sanctions on de Moraes and other Brazilian officials.

The measures in support of Bolsonaro did not have their desired effect and the trial proceeded nevertheless. Lula's popularity was boosted by the perception that he was defending Brazilian sovereignty.

Bolsonaro is not the first former president to spend time behind bars. His predecessor Michel Temer (2016-2018) and his successor Lula have also been to prison. Fernando Collor de Mello, who governed between 1990 and 1992, is currently under house arrest due to a corruption conviction.

Bolsonaro is the first to be convicted of attempting a coup.