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Brazil: Groups Pledge to Oppose Bolsonaro's 'Hateful Rhetoric'

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Incoming President Jair Bolsonaro's positions pose a serious threat to democracy, environment and human rights.

Forty-six environmental groups, academic organizations, human rights organizations, labor unions, religious groups and other civil society organizations - in a statement Friday - have pledged to oppose any "hateful rhetoric and acts of violence, intimidation or persecution" by the incoming administration of Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro.

"President-elect [Bolsonaro] positions pose a serious threat to democracy, human rights and the environment," the signatories of the statement remarked, adding that they reaffirm their support for "individuals and courageous groups in Brazil who strive to defend constitutionally protected rights and freedoms in an increasingly challenging environment."

The statement describes how Bolsonaro threatened to reduce environmental safeguards in Amazonian-protected forests while abolishing constitutional rights over Indigenous territories in order to allow the expansion of timber, mining and agribusiness activities.

"The election of right-wing extremist Jair Bolsonaro as the next president of Brazil represents a crisis for Indigenous rights, the Amazon rainforest and our global climate," Christian Poirier, director of Amazon Watch, said, clarifying that "an increase in violent attacks against Indigenous peoples and social movements has already occurred since the election."

Signatories to the statement recalled that Bolsonaro threatened not to recognize the results of the presidential election if he was not proclaimed the winner, and that he also spoke favorably about the former military dictatorship of Brazil, often taking positions that are fundamentally at odds with democratic values.

The group noted that Bolsonaro talked about purging leftist activists and described members of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) as terrorists.

"Two MST leaders were murdered by masked armed men on Dec. 8," the statement reads and highlighted that "Bolsonaro's odious and threatening rhetoric is making Brazil - already the world leader in killings of defenders of the land and the environment - a much more dangerous place."

Bolsonaro's misogynist, racist and homophobic comments have also been contributing to a political climate that encourages violence against minority communities.

"It is important that people in these communities in Brazil, who have fought so long for equality, know that they are not alone," Gladys Mitchell-Walthour, president of the Brazilian Studies Association, commented.

"Workers Party will not participate in Bolsonaro's inauguration in Congress. Absence aims to denounce "coup" and fake news scheme in elections."

"It's hard to overstate the threat Bolsonaro poses to minority communities in Brazil, including to Indigenous communities already threatened by the extractive and grileiro (or land grabbing) industries," Jeff Conant, Friends of the Earth's Senior Manager, said recalling that the incoming president seems to disregard climate change and put commercial interests first.

The open statement was signed by Amazon Watch, AFL-CIO, Friends of the Earth, USA Center for International Policy, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, The National Network for Democracy in Brazil, Brazilians for Democracy and Social Justice, International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Global Justice Ecology Project, Community Alliance for Global Justice, Rainforest Foundation, and Alliance of Baptists, among others.

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