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Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro threatens purge of leftwing 'outlaws'

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The far-right favourite to become Brazil's next president has vowed to spearhead a historic purge of his leftwing political foes in a menacing address that delighted supporters and left opponents outraged and unnerved.

[Jair Bolsonaro](#) looks set for a landslide victory over his Workers' party (PT) rival Fernando Haddad when the world's fourth-largest democracy returns to the polls on Sunday for the decisive second round of its presidential election. Latest polls give him an 18-point lead over Haddad.

In [a confrontational video address](#) to supporters on Sunday, the pro-torture former paratrooper pledged to use the presidency to launch a frontal assault on his "red" political rivals.

"Either they go overseas, or they go to jail," Bolsonaro told thousands of cheering supporters who had packed Avenida Paulista, one of São Paulo's main arteries, for one of his final campaign acts.

"These red outlaws will be banished from our homeland. It will be a cleanup the likes of which has never been seen in Brazilian history," Bolsonaro declared in [his 10-minute address](#) by videolink from his home in Rio de Janeiro, where he has

been recovering following a near-fatal assassination attempt last month.

Photograph: Mauro Pimentel/AFP/Getty Images

“Crooks” from Brazil’s landless workers movement (MST) would be designated as terrorists, Bolsonaro vowed, while the leftist former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – whom he mocked as a “drunkard” – would be left “to rot in jail”, along with other top PT politicians, including Haddad.

“We are the majority. We are the true [Brazil](#). Together with this Brazilian people we will build a new nation,” Bolsonaro declared, later adding: “We are the voice of freedom ... We do not want socialism.”

Euphoric Bolsonaro supporters, many of them wearing the yellow and green of Brazil’s national flag, cheered the oration with chants of “Brazil, Brazil, Brazil, Brazil!” and their leader’s nickname: “Legend! Legend! Legend! Legend!”

Progressive Brazilians and members of its left, who fear Bolsonaro could plunge their country back into authoritarianism, were aghast by the incendiary words of their likely next president, who is notorious for his hate-filled rhetoric.

“Brasil, ame-o ou deixe-o,” [tweeted](#) Cynara Menezes, a Brazilian journalist – a reference to the infamous slogan of its 1964-85 dictatorship. “Brazil, love it or leave it.”

Guilherme Boulos, a young leftist politician some call [Lula’s heir](#), described Bolsonaro’s speech as “typical of an authoritarian and dictatorial mind”.

“We will push on with the democratic resistance,” Boulos vowed.

One distraught Brazilian voter used Facebook to urge friends to think again before Sunday’s election. “Everyone who votes for him or spoils their vote will have blood on their hands,” she wrote.

Lilia Schwarcz, a Brazilian historian and writer who witnessed Bolsonaro’s address as she left an art gallery near Sunday’s rally, said she had been disturbed by his inflammatory rhetoric.

“The way he spoke ... he is asking people to be violent – this is not democracy,” Schwarcz said.

“He speaks like a very authoritarian leader – it reminds us of other regimes ... We know this film. We know this kind of movie. It is a very authoritarian one.”

José Roberto de Toledo, a political journalist from the magazine *Piauí*, said: “It’s an escalation. As Mussolini would say: ‘If you pluck a chicken one feather at a time, people don’t notice.’”