
Big blow to Dilma Rousseff in Brazil as coalition ally quits

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Brazil's biggest political party is quitting the government of President [Dilma Rousseff](#), leaving her further isolated as she battles efforts to impeach her.

As the largest party in both congress's lower house and the senate, the move by the populist Democratic Movement of [Brazil](#) (PMDB) increases the chances of the president's opponents mustering the two-thirds majority of congress required to oust her.

An impeachment motion making its way through the lower house alleges Ms Rousseff broke the country's fiscal laws but the campaign to oust her is being driven by anger at her mismanagement of the economy and revelations that her Workers' Party oversaw a huge corruption scheme inside state-controlled oil giant [Petrobras](#).

Amid shouts of "Workers Party Out" the [PMDB](#) formalised its break at a meeting on Tuesday of its national directory. Already one of its seven ministers has quit the cabinet with the six remaining members expected to depart by April 12th.

If Ms Rousseff is impeached her estranged vice-president and PMDB leader [Michel Temer](#) will take her place, despite having been cited by a senator arrested in the Petrobras investigation as one of the scheme's participants.

Petrobras investigation

Two smaller coalition allies are also emitting signals that they too are planning to abandon the government. Other allies have already jumped ship in recent weeks as the administration becomes increasingly overwhelmed by the flow of revelations from the Petrobras investigation and worsening economic indicators that show the economy remains locked in its longest recession in decades.

The disintegration of the ideologically promiscuous coalition he put in place for his successor and protégée marks a

major setback for former president [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), who unlike Ms Rousseff maintains good relations with the PMDB.

Despite being under investigation over his possible role in the Petrobras scandal, Mr Lula was called back to government by the president in a bid to save her mandate with his first mission being to keep the PMDB in the government.

Still waiting to hear from the supreme court over whether he can be installed as cabinet chief, Mr Lula says he will now focus on convincing members of the departing parties to vote against impeachment. At a press conference on Tuesday he said the goal now was to "build a base of support with individual PMDB members for a coalition without the leadership's agreement".

In its bid to prevent impeachment garnering the support of 342 of the 513 deputies in the lower house, the government has been trying to win over wavering members to its cause with promises of official appointments and funds they can distribute among supporters, a strategy analysts say could work with mid-term elections looming in October.
