
Impeachment Is Political Payback, Lawyer for Brazil's Rousseff Says

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Jose Eduardo Cardozo blamed the speaker of the lower house, Eduardo Cunha, a declared political foe of Rousseff.

The speaker gave his approval to opening impeachment proceedings against Rousseff the day after the president's Workers Party supported a motion to haul Cunha before Congress' ethics committee in connection with his alleged involvement in the \$2 billion corruption scandal centered on state oil company Petrobras.

Cunha, according to Cardozo, pressed the Workers Party and its coalition allies to block the ethics probe.

"A government that bends before that kind of situation would have no legitimacy," the attorney told the 65-member panel that is weighing a proposal to impeach Rousseff for ostensibly manipulating budget numbers to disguise the size of the deficit.

Cardozo insisted Monday that the actions imputed to the president were "within the legal framework," blasting the current impeachment process as "anti-constitutional and illegal."

The ouster of Rousseff under these circumstances "will never be forgiven," the solicitor general said.

More than half of the members of the impeachment commission are under investigation for corruption or other serious crimes.

A two-thirds majority is needed in the lower house to move the proceedings to the Senate, where the vote of a simple majority would be sufficient to launch an impeachment trial, during which time Rousseff would have to leave office for six months and be replaced by her vice president, Michel Temer, whose name has also been linked to the Petrobras case.

Temer's party, the PMDB, announced last week that it was formally breaking with the Rousseff administration, a move seen as signaling the party's intention to support the impeachment of the president, who won a second four-year term in October 2014.
