
Brazil's Rousseff Says Impeachment Process Is 'Unarmed Coup'

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Brazil's impeachment attempt greenlighted by the lower house is a baseless campaign by the government's political opponents to seize the power they couldn't win at the ballot box, President Dilma Rousseff argued Tuesday as the Senate started the next phase of the process, moving her one step closer to possible suspension from office.

"My second term in office has been characterized by destabilization attempts," Rousseff said at a press conference with international media. She maintained that the opposition gave the first signs of their destabilization plans after her 2014 election, when she won more than 54 million votes.

"This is a coup. They have no legal basis for impeachment," she said. "It doesn't have to be an armed coup to be a coup."

Rousseff went on to argue that she is a victim of a process of "half-truths" and that the accusations against her do not justify impeachment under Brazil's constitution.

"It is very interesting that very few of the lawmakers who voted in favor made reference to the reasons for the impeachment," Rousseff continued, referring to the rowdy marathon vote in Congress on Sunday.

Rousseff is accused of changing budget accounts ahead of her 2014 re-election. The allegations pale in comparison to the massive corruption scandals in which many of her political opponents are embroiled and also do not implicate her in any personal enrichment schemes or financial impropriety.

The president called attention to the fact that the official who spearheaded the impeachment attempt, lower house speaker Eduardo Cunha, is himself deeply caught up in allegations of fraud. Indeed, he is facing charges and possible impeachment over a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme and money laundering. She argued that he launched the impeachment process in an attempt to shield himself from charges and called the campaign against

her a form of "explicit revenge."

She also noted that the so-called campaign to root out corruption has only been launched against her own government and that of her predecessor Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, highlighting the hypocrisy of their fraud-ridden political rivals.

"It is not an impeachment process, but a direct election of a group that through other means could not have access (to power)," she argued.

The comments come as the Brazilian Senate began to review Tuesday the request for an impeachment process against the president. An impeachment motion passed with a two-thirds majority in the lower house on Sunday.

If the vote passes in the Senate for Rousseff to face investigation on route to possible impeachment, the president would be suspended from office and replaced by Vice President Michel Temer, who faces corruption charges, possible impeachment and lower approval ratings than Rousseff.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff argued she's the victim of an impeachment attempt that has no legal basis.

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