

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 7, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our concern regarding attacks on Brazil's independent democratic institutions. In recent months, President Jair Bolsonaro has made repeated statements defying basic democratic norms, challenging the rule of law, and threatening a rupture with Brazil's constitutional order. Given Brazil's status as one of the world's largest democracies and economies and a principal U.S. ally in the region, the deterioration of Brazilian democracy carries implications throughout our hemisphere and beyond. We urge you to make clear that the United States supports Brazil's democratic institutions, and that any undemocratic break with the current constitutional order will have serious consequences.

President Bolsonaro has made a series of increasingly dangerous statements regarding Brazil's 2022 general elections, in which he plans to run for reelection. He has repeatedly insisted that he will refuse to concede the elections if he loses. He also claims, without evidence, that these elections will constitute a farce marred by fraud barring a substantial reform to the voting system. In fact, Brazil's electoral system is regarded as one of the world's most secure. On several occasions, President Bolsonaro has reiterated that he will only end his current tenure in office by being "jailed, killed, or victorious." This type of reckless language is dangerous in any democracy, but it is especially unmerited in a democracy of Brazil's caliber, which for decades has shown itself capable of facilitating peaceful transfers of power.

Just as concerning, President Bolsonaro has engaged in personal attacks against members of Brazil's Supreme Electoral Tribunal and Supreme Court, and has stated he is willing to resort to unconstitutional maneuvers to prevent these institutions from exercising their legally-mandated authorities. If President Bolsonaro follows through with his promises to openly disregard rulings of the Supreme Court, it would set a dangerous precedent for further attempts to undermine rule of law by Bolsonaro or any future president of Brazil.

Brazilian civil society leaders from across the political spectrum have spoken out clearly against such unconstitutional measures. On August 5, a diverse group of business leaders, politicians, and academics published an open letter proclaiming, "Brazilian society is guarantor of the constitution and will not accept authoritarian adventures." The United States should be equally clear that we support Brazil's democratic system, which has long empowered the Brazilian people to freely and independently choose their leaders.

As two of the hemisphere's two largest democracies, the United States and Brazil maintain widespread cooperation on security, economic, and diplomatic matters. Moreover, our partnership with Brazil should be a bulwark against undemocratic actors, from China and Russia to Cuba and Venezuela, which seek to

undermine democratic stability in our hemisphere. Indeed, as the hemisphere contends with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, the United States stands to benefit now more than ever from a strong partnership with Brazil. A disruption of Brazil's constitutional order would jeopardize the very foundation of this bilateral relationship. As democracies around the globe grapple with unprecedented challenges, we urge you to make support for Brazilian democracy a top diplomatic priority, including in bilateral discussions related to Brazilian membership in organizations such as the OECD and NATO.

We strongly support the Biden Administration's defense and promotion of democracy, as demonstrated by the planned Summit for Democracy, which makes these issues even more crucial. Please count on our support for your efforts to strengthen our regional partnerships and uphold democratic principles in the hemisphere.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator