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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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02.11.2022

Lula is elected president of Brazil as Bolsonaro maintains silence on results

Workers Party (PT)'s candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva won Brazil's presidential election on Sunday, defeating the incumbent fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro. Lula won 60.3 million votes (50.9 percent) against 58.2 million votes (49.1 percent) for Bolsonaro. This was the smallest margin of victory in a presidential race since 1989, the first election after the end of the 1964-1985 military dictatorship.

Even with both candidates receiving record votes, a quarter of Brazilian voters refused to vote, either by not showing up at the polls (20.57 percent) or by casting a blank or invalid ballot (4.59 percent).



Brazil's president-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva addressing supporters in São Paulo [Photo: Rovena Rosa/Agência Brasil]

Inspired by former US President Donald Trump and trying to repeat in Brazil a “Capitol Hill scenario,” Bolsonaro has carried out, with the support of the armed forces, a systematic campaign to discredit the Brazilian electoral system. He will undoubtedly seek to exploit the divisions exposed in the election, with two months to escalate his dictatorial conspiracy until the presidential inauguration on January 1, 2023.

Of the 27 Brazilian states, including the Federal District, Lula won in 13 and Bolsonaro in 14. Lula had the most votes in the nine states of Brazil’s impoverished Northeast, while Bolsonaro won in every state in the Midwest, the South and in three of the four states in the Southeast.

Sunday’s election also chose the governors of 12 Brazilian states. Along with the right-wing União Brasil party, whose origins date back to the ruling party of Brazil’s military dictatorship, the PT was the party with the most elected governors. It won in the four Northeastern states it already ruled, Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí and Ceará. In São Paulo, Brazil’s largest and richest state, the PT’s candidate for governor, Fernando Haddad, was defeated by Bolsonaro’s ally, Tarcísio de Freitas.

Lula’s victory was hailed by leaders of imperialist powers and the self-proclaimed “leftist” presidents of Latin America, which in recent years has seen a return to power in several countries of bourgeois nationalist politicians linked to the “Pink Tide.”

“Congratulations, dear Lula, on your election that begins a new chapter in the history of Brazil,” French President Emmanuel Macron wrote on Twitter. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz tweeted, “I look forward to close and reliable cooperation.” In November of last year, Lula met with Macron and Scholz on a trip to Europe that sought the legitimization of his candidacy by the European imperialist powers.

US President Joe Biden wrote: “I send my congratulations to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on his election to be the next president of Brazil following free, fair, and credible elections. I look forward to working together to continue the cooperation between our two countries in the months and years ahead.” The *New York Times* also hailed Lula’s victory after endorsing his candidacy in an editorial on Thursday titled “Brazil’s Presidential Election Will Determine the Planet’s Future.”

In his speech after the announcement of the election results, Lula emphasized that he intends to form a government of national unity with the political right to “rebuild” Brazil. His victory, he said, was the result of “an immense democratic movement that was formed, above political parties, personal interests and ideologies, so that democracy would emerge victorious.”

He claimed that the fight against hunger was the number one priority of his government, while also promising to “reestablish dialogue between government, businessmen, workers and organized civil society” and to “regain the credibility, predictability and stability of the country, so that investors— national and foreign—will regain confidence in Brazil.”

Recognizing Lula’s efforts to win the support of the section of the bourgeoisie which opposed him, and to form “a government beyond the PT,” the São Paulo stock market closed up on the first day after the election, and the dollar was down.

Regarding policies for the Amazon, Lula made a point in his speech that was a signal to the imperialist governments, especially those of Macron and Biden, who had criticized Bolsonaro’s management of the rainforest. “We are open to international cooperation to preserve the Amazon, whether in the form of investment or scientific research,” Lula declared.

On Paulista Avenue in São Paulo, where Lula’s supporters celebrated the victory of the PT candidate, Lula also said that “In any place in the world, the defeated president would have already called me to concede defeat, but so far he hasn’t. I don’t know if he will call. And I don’t know if he will acknowledge it.”

Twenty-four hours after Lula’s victory on Sunday night, Bolsonaro had still refused to comment on the election results. His ominous silence comes on top of the military’s refusal to present the conclusions of its “parallel count” of the vote before the inauguration of the new president. This intervention by the armed forces was initiated on the basis of false allegations of a “risk of fraud” at the polls.

The coming weeks will be marked by an escalation of political tensions in the Brazilian state and society.

The week before the election had already seen new attempts by Bolsonaro’s supporters to cast doubt on the legitimacy of election results. Last Monday, Bolsonaro’s campaign organizers and his minister of communications, Fabio Faria, alleged that radio stations in the Northeast had stopped broadcasting their electoral propaganda, giving an advantage to the PT candidate. Politicians linked to the fascistic president, among them his son Eduardo Bolsonaro, used these allegations as a pretext for demanding that the elections be postponed. The Superior Electoral Court (TSE) found that the accusations were backed by no evidence.

In a flagrant attempt to make it harder for voters to reach the polls on election day, the Federal Highway Police (PRF) conducted more than 600 operations against public transportation, half of them in the states in the Northeast. The decision to organize the

blockades came directly from the president on October 19, who met with the justice minister who oversees the PRF.

A ruling by TSE president Alexandre de Moraes the day before the elections prohibiting operations that interfered with the transportation of voters was provocatively ignored by the PRF. The TSE has sought to avoid a confrontation by declaring that the illegal operations did not alter the electoral outcome.

Both Bolsonaro and the military are looking for a pretext to advance their authoritarian agenda after his electoral defeat.

Last week, the far-right Gazeta do Povo website published an article titled “Military worries about disorder in the streets after Sunday’s vote count.” The article stated:

“The perception among active and reserve military personnel speaking to Gazeta do Povo is that an eventual defeat of Bolsonaro at the polls could further inflame the spirits of voters and lead them to the streets in demonstrations and protests against the TSE and the Supreme Court (STF).” In this case, the report continued, “the Armed Forces would be responsible for establishing order by means of an Operation to Guarantee Law and Order [that is, a domestic intervention by the military].”

Retired General Maynard Santa Rosa, former head of the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic at the beginning of the Bolsonaro administration, was quoted in the article: “I think it’s not only possible, but probable. If there is some climate of uprising and conflict that gets out of the control of the civil authorities, it is possible that there will be a participation of troops. It is worrying. I think we are in a climate of potential crisis.”

Initial demonstrations of this character began shortly after the announcement of the election results, with Bolsonaro supporters blocking roads across the country, especially in regions dominated by sections of agribusiness and corporations linked to the fascistic president. As of early Monday afternoon, 81 protests had been registered on highways in 14 states across Brazil. The protesters, some identified as truck drivers, have as their main demand an intervention by the military.

In Brasilia, traffic on the Esplanade of the Ministries was blocked by the Public Safety Secretariat of the Federal District after “identifying a possible act scheduled for the location on social networks.” In addition to the seats of the legislative and executive branches, the Supreme Federal Court, one of the main targets of Bolsonaro’s threats, is located on the Esplanade.

Should Lula make it through the turmoil that is expected in the coming months, he will lead a government even more to the right than his previous two administrations (2003-2011), and one marked by deep political instability.

The latest developments confirm the warnings of the Socialist Equality Group (SEG) about the grave dangers facing the Brazilian working class. They reinforce its call for a mobilization of the working class independent of the PT and its pseudo-left apologists to counter the escalating threats of dictatorship.

World Socialist 01.11.2022