



PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE **ALLIANCE PROGRESSISTE**

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Against the restriction of civil and democratic freedoms in Brazil

As already expressed earlier in its 2018 resolution (“Against the threat to social democracy in Brazil”) the Progressive Alliance is deeply concerned about the political developments in Brazil following the election of far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro as president.

The democratically elected president Dilma Rousseff was removed from office in May 2016 with questionable justifications. This move has crushed the democratic normality that had been reintroduced into Brazil by the 1988 constitution. It has ended a period of change that brought about broader social participation in the political process and a decrease in social and economic inequality. Acting without democratic legitimacy, the ensuing government, headed by former Vice-President Michel Temer, passed a number of reforms which resulted in massive social and economic regression.

The intrigues surrounding the prosecution of former President Lula without any proof of personal guilt on his part were recently revealed by the publication of hacked chat messages between the public prosecutor and the responsible judge. Lula’s conviction is the preliminary climax of an attack on the rule of law and Brazilian democracy, because Lula was prevented in this way from taking part in elections. According to opinion polls he was clearly leading at the time. The corruption scandal being pursued by the “Lava Jato” task force was instrumentalised politically to prevent a new government headed by the Workers’ Party (PT).

It was in this context of violation of democratic standards and huge dissemination of fake news and hate discourses that Jair Bolsonaro, a retired military captain who represents the extreme right and



defends the military dictatorship, was elected president. The discourse held by the president not only legitimated his support for the use of violence against opponents, it also strengthened structural racism, prejudice and all forms of intolerance.

The new government is striking out at the institutes of a pluralistic and modern democracy established over the past three decades. With reference to Brazil, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Chile recently raised concerns over “a shrinking of civil and democratic space”, the existence of a “public discourse legitimising summary executions” and entrenching of impunity.

Implementation of strict austerity measures, a wave of unquestioned privatisation measures and the reform of laws governing pensions have deepened economic recession and aggravated poverty, as well as compromising the state’s ability to promote the country’s continued development. As in other countries, there are signs of neoliberal concepts failing once again.

The imminent repeated reform of labour laws is also geared towards this concept. It is leading to considerable undermining of workers’ rights and guarantees, as well as insecurity of the labour market, and is obviously intended to weaken the trade unions.

Brazil is experiencing rapid reversal of the social achievements gained over the past two decades as well as a dismantling of its institutional control mechanisms. In this way, the country’s democratic foundations are being eroded, while at the same time destruction of the Amazon rainforest and other natural habitats, along with their indigenous populations, is accelerating.

- The Progressive Alliance expresses its deep concern about the way democracy in Brazil is being eroded, both by the way the present government came into power as well as by the actions of this government.
- The Progressive Alliance condemns the way the Brazilian government is inciting violence and reducing the scope for



democratic participation and debate. The relationship between the government and civilian society is “characterised by attacks against human rights defenders and restrictions imposed on civil society work”. We share this judgment of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights.

- The Progressive Alliance calls on the government of Brazil to maintain the guarantees and democratic freedoms in the spirit of the 1988 constitution and to respect the universal validity of human rights as well as the pluralism of ideas, of identity, of belief, of ideologies and of political positions.
- The Progressive Alliance urges the government to respect trade union organisations and labour legislation.
- The Progressive Alliance reaffirms the manifesto of 17 lawyers, jurists, former ministers of justice and former members of Supreme Courts of Justice from eight countries: “Lula was not tried, he was the victim of political persecution.” And this is the reason why the Progressive Alliance demands Lula’s definite release.
- The Progressive Alliance greets the decision approved on November 7th by the Brazilian Supreme Court reaffirming the provision of the Brazilian Constitution that nobody should be submitted to accomplish a sentence before a final condemnation is issued by the juridical system. This decision allows for the immediate release of Lula and other political prisoners in Brazil.