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Brazil

# Significant success for anti-Bolsonaro protests

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**The protests in Brazil on 2 October 2021 for *Fora Bolsonaro* (Bolsonaro out)** were called well in advance, without improvisation. Military police estimate that in São Paulo, the demonstration spanned 10 blocks. That's about 100,000 protesters. The Cinelândia in Rio de Janeiro was crowded. In Belo Horizonte, no less than 80,000 people marched. At the southern tip of Brazil, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, including in the towns of the gaucho interior, the cry of “*Fora Bolsonaro*” was also heard. This was also the case in all the capitals of the north, the northeast and in all the major cities of the country. Around the world, several capitals saw actions of solidarity with the struggle in Brazil.

The result of 2 October is an essential element in analysing the balance of forces. First, because this unitary action blocks a possible deterioration of the balance of power in the streets in favour of the government, despite Bolsonaro's declining popularity and growing isolation which make his re-election increasingly unlikely. The 2 October erases in the memory of the masses 7 September, when Bolsonarismo had shown its strength in the street. And since 2013 presence in the street in Brazil has become one of the indicators of deep social and political trends, which are putting pressure for institutional changes.

On 7 September, it appeared that the far right had lost much of its ability to mobilize, but that, despite everything, its weight on the streets still existed, and that, without a response, Bolsonaro could maintain himself while the far right radicalized and became more effective. The actions of the truckers the next day, openly supported by sectors of the bosses, indicated its ability to produce a crisis and to influence the course of events, either to put pressure on the institutions of an already limited democracy, or even to paralyse them.

## Bourgeoisie and Lula favour electoral route

On 7 September, the democratic movement *Fora Bolsonaro* (Bolsonaro out!) had gathered a much smaller number of demonstrators than Bolsonarismo. The timid call by the coordination of the movement had allowed fear to grow, even if the actions of the vanguard had been dignified and made it possible to contest Bolsonarismo's monopoly of the street on Independence Day. Today (2 October), the street was completely for *Fora Bolsonaro*. This is a great victory that we must celebrate as such. This is proof that through the streets and not only in opinion polls, the opposition is the strongest. We must acknowledge, however, that the demonstrations of 2 October did not reach the level of mobilization of other days of struggle of the *Fora Bolsonaro* movement in the past. But they gathered more people than Bolsonarismo on 7 September, and no doubt had a wider national extension.

If the symbolic force of Bolsonarismo that gathered more people in São Paulo was more “explosive,” their day of action was focused on only two events in São Paulo and Brasília, at which moreover Bolsonaro was present. Our 2 October was not the biggest of our actions for two reasons:

– The leadership of the PT and Lula have already chosen as their main strategy electoral confrontation with Bolsonarismo. Lula's absence from the protests is an indication that in his political work he gives more importance to building alliances to win elections than to street protests. The street plays a secondary role in the politics of the PT leadership to keep its social base in suspense, but by infusing minds with the idea that the vote is the weapon that will really remove Bolsonaro from power.

– The liberal bourgeoisie, which has not found a candidate capable of fighting Bolsonaro, does not want to risk impeachment.

Meanwhile, the Centrão (a centrist group of mercenary deputies) is using the government for its own corrupt ends, and business groups applaud and push Bolsonaro to implement even more neoliberal adjustments. While a section of the bourgeoisie, whose most significant intellectual expression is Delfim Neto, has already rallied to the alliance with Lula, the majority is still looking for a candidate of its own. Until one is found one, this sector has no interest in pushing for impeachment on the streets. In addition, Bolsonaro showed his strength on 7 September and warned that he will not accept his impeachment, let alone his imprisonment or that of those close to him, without resistance. Concerned about the fallout from the incendiary acts and speeches of 7 September, Bolsonaro asked Michel Temer (a devious old politician, this former vice-president of Dilma Rousseff became president after her impeachment) to write a letter that Bolsonaro would sign to seal an armistice with the judicial and parliamentary institutions. It remains to be seen whether this will last until the elections. But the sign that the liberal bourgeoisie has decided to back down in the face of impeachment has also dampened the confidence of the millions of people who have taken to the streets to demand Bolsonaro's departure.

## Creating a balance of power to bring Bolsonaro down

Thus, the 2 October protests, after many weeks without unified national actions, opened up an alternative. It can be both the last real mass mobilization to put Bolsonaro out of the game by the force of the street and the first electoral mobilization or it can be a rebound, a new attempt by “Fora Bolsonaro,” at the initiative of the street. The forces of the superstructure from above do not want the street to speak so loudly. They prefer a game dominated by traditional institutions and electoral initiatives. The revolutionary impulse has not, so far, been able to defeat these forces. We can even say that this is far from being the case. But that’s the wager we’re making. It is a bet without guaranteed success in changing the balance of forces and imposing the fall of the government, in opposition to the institutional and electoral forces. But it is worth making this bet because it is the only way to develop the political and social forces that will give a basis to new institutions, built in struggle and meeting the expectations of the street. This is the only way to build the social foundations of an anti-capitalist programme.

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