

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 9, 2022

President Joseph Biden
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In anticipation of Brazil's general elections on October 2, 2022, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding systematic attacks on democratic institutions in the world's fourth largest democracy. The Brazilian electronic voting system, regarded as one of the safest and most reliable voting systems in the world, has been a target of repeated and unfounded attacks by President Jair Bolsonaro. Having personally experienced the horrors of the January 6 insurrection, we know all too well the consequences that can occur when demagogues promote disinformation about the legitimacy and integrity of electoral processes, publicly attack independent electoral authorities, and incite supporters to prop up their baseless claims. In light of these serious, all too familiar challenges to Brazil's democracy, the United States has a duty as Brazil's longstanding partner to use all available diplomatic and assistance tools to denounce and deter actions threatening to incite political violence in the country and undermine the integrity of its electoral process.

On July 18, 2022, in a meeting with the diplomatic corps, President Bolsonaro stated that "the (electronic) system is completely vulnerable," without presenting any evidence of fraud. This was not the first time that he has attempted to discredit the Brazilian electoral institutions. In recent years, he has actively promoted a campaign calling the electronic system into question, attacked the impartiality of Brazil's Supreme Court and Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and threatened he would only end his current tenure in office by being "jailed, killed, or victorious." Despite Brazil's track record of holding free, fair, and transparent elections with no occurrences of significant fraud since the introduction of its electronic voting system in 1996, President Bolsonaro continues making these baseless claims.

President Bolsonaro's reckless and dangerous rhetoric about electoral fraud raise serious fears that he will potentially impede a peaceful transfer of power if he loses. In June, he publicly promised to "go to war" if necessary to prevent a stolen election. On September 7, 2021, President Bolsonaro urged his supporters to attack the country's Supreme Court. Most concerning of all, President Bolsonaro has also called on the armed forces to intervene in the electoral process by conducting a parallel vote count, a function constitutionally reserved to the Electoral Justice of Brazil. In doing so, he is jeopardizing the constitutionally-mandated neutrality of the military, a significant concern given recent statements by high-level Brazilian military leaders, such as the head of the Brazilian Navy, seemingly backing President Bolsonaro's electoral fraud claims.

As Brazil's election approaches, we are increasingly alarmed by the significant risk such rhetoric and actions pose to the prospect of the country holding a peaceful electoral process. The head of Brazil's Electoral Court warned in July that the country is at risk of experiencing unrest even more severe than the January 6 insurrection, and there is already evidence that political violence

is escalating sharply. The risk of political violence is only greater for candidates from vulnerable populations, including female, LGBTIQ+, Indigenous, and Afro-Brazilian communities. According to a survey conducted by the Marielle Franco Institute, nearly 100 percent of Black candidates reported being subjected to at least one type of political violence in the 2020 elections. This reality is exacerbated by the dramatic increase in the number of weapons in circulation in Brazil since Bolsonaro took office, which was facilitated by several presidential decrees.

We commend statements by your administration expressing complete confidence in the strength of Brazil's democratic institutions and the ability of its electoral system to carry out free and fair elections. It is imperative that these efforts continue in private and public, but alone they are insufficient. Given the unprecedented threats to Brazil's general elections, we urge you to take additional steps to make it unequivocally clear to President Bolsonaro, his administration, and Brazilian security forces that Brazil will find itself isolated from the United States and the international community of democracies should there be any attempts to subvert the country's electoral process. Your administration should ensure that the Brazilian government understands that any such efforts will be met with serious consequences, including a review of Brazil's status as a global NATO partner and major non-NATO ally, U.S. support for Brazil's accession to the OECD, and future bilateral defense and security cooperation.

At such a perilous time for democracy around the globe and such a crucial moment for Brazil's democracy in particular, the United States and the international community must stand in solidarity with the millions of Brazilians from across the political spectrum, including hundreds of civil society, religious, political, and business leaders, who have publicly denounced threats to Brazil's democracy. We must repudiate all attempts by President Bolsonaro to dismiss election results, repress peaceful public demonstrations, impair the ability of minority groups to safely exercise their political rights, attack the press and human rights defenders, instigate political violence, and have the armed forces interfere in the electoral process. As members of Congress, we commit to continue working with you to ensure that the United States' important partnership with Brazil remains predicated on a shared commitment to democratic values and human rights, beginning with absolute respect for free and fair elections.

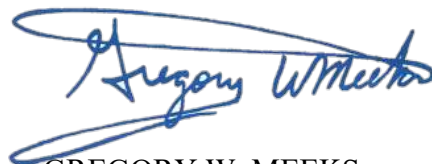
Sincerely,



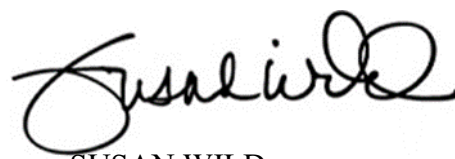
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United States Senator



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator




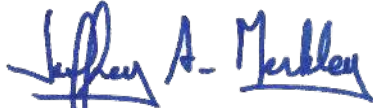
GREGORY W. MEEKS
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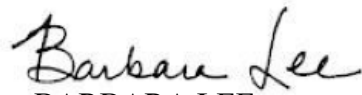

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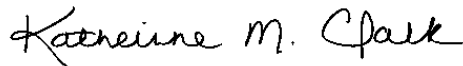
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