

US sanctions Brazil's Supreme Court justice overseeing case against Bolsonaro



RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The U.S. Treasury Department on Wednesday announced sanctions on Brazilian Supreme Court Justice [Alexandre de Moraes](#) over alleged suppression of freedom of expression and the ongoing trial of former President Jair Bolsonaro.

De Moraes oversees the criminal case against Bolsonaro, who is accused of [masterminding a plot to stay in power](#) despite his 2022 election defeat to current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

“De Moraes is responsible for an oppressive campaign of censorship, arbitrary detentions that violate human rights, and politicized prosecutions — including against former President Jair Bolsonaro,” U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

The department cited the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which targets perpetrators of human rights abuse and corrupt officials, as its authority to issue the sanctions.

The decision orders the freezing of any assets or property de Moraes may have in the U.S.

Brazil's Supreme Court and the Presidential Palace did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Wednesday's sanctions follow the U.S. State Department's announcement of visa restrictions on Brazilian judicial officials, including de Moraes, on July 18.

They also come after U.S. President Donald Trump announced [a 50% tariff on Brazilian imported goods](#) on July 9. In a letter announcing the tariff, Trump explicitly linked the import tax to what he called the “witch hunt” trial of Bolsonaro currently underway in Brazil.

Trump appears to identify with Bolsonaro, who is accused of trying to overturn the results of his 2022 loss to Lula. Similarly, Trump was indicted in 2023 on allegations that he tried to overturn the results of the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

Bolsonaro has been [ordered to wear an ankle monitor](#) after being deemed a flight risk.

Bolsonaro's son Eduardo celebrated the U.S. Treasury Department announcement on X, calling it a "historic milestone" and a warning that "abuses of authority now have global consequences."

[Eduardo Bolsonaro](#) relocated to the U.S. in March and is under investigation for allegedly working with U.S. authorities to impose sanctions against Brazilian officials.

Also on Wednesday, Trump [signed an executive order](#) to implement the 50% tariff announced earlier this month. The White House said in a statement that the order was a response to "recent policies, practices, and actions" of Brazil that "constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States."

That was a shift in rationale for the tariff. The legal basis of the threat on July 9 was an earlier executive order premised on trade imbalances being a threat to the U.S. economy. But the U.S. ran a \$6.8 billion trade surplus last year with Brazil, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In Wednesday's order, Trump said Brazil's policies and criminal prosecution of [former President Jair Bolsonaro](#) constitute an economic emergency under a 1977 law.

After the tariff was announced earlier this month, Lula said that Trump wasn't elected to be "emperor of the world." He has defended Brazil's sovereignty and the independence of Brazil's judiciary.

Lula called an emergency meeting with some ministers following Wednesday's events, local newspaper O Globo reported.

The left-wing president had earlier sanctioned a law banning the use of live animals in laboratory testing for personal hygiene products, cosmetics and perfumes, calling Wednesday a "sacred day of sovereignty."

In a video posted on social media, Lula said he left the event in capital Brasilia in a hurry to defend "the sovereignty of the Brazilian people in light of the measures announced by the President of the United States."

Originally due to come into effect on Aug 1, Wednesday's order said the tariffs would go into effect seven days after its signing.

Flavia Loss, an international relations professor at Foundation School of Sociology and Politics in Sao Paulo, said the sanctions against Moraes and the tariffs order marked an escalation in the tensions between the U.S. and Brazil.

"We are not talking about a normal commercial dispute between countries, we are talking about using commercial tools to coerce what happens in Brazil," Loss said.

Human Rights Watch in Brazil said on X the sanctions "are a clear violation of judicial independence, a pillar of democracy."

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