



**Latin-Amerikagruppene
i Norge (LAG)**

**Brazil's weakened democracy is at stake:
We condemn the political persecution and imprisonment of Lula, the leading
candidate in Brazil's October presidential election.**

The intensifying political persecution of former Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva escalated to a full-scale crisis when he was imprisoned this Saturday. Lula's candidacy is supported by popular movements, labor and progressive organizations and public figures, and tens of millions of Brazilians.

Recent electoral polls show that Lula da Silva is the leading candidate in the next presidential election, scheduled for October. Brazil's elite political class seek to prevent the popular ex-president from recapturing the presidency, which would threaten their current repressive, pro-corporate policies. This agenda includes privatization of energy and Brazil's strategic resources, elimination of the federal government's civil rights divisions, and the upward transfer of wealth to Brazil's elite and foreign investors.

Regrettably the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled against the most basic of human and constitutional rights, the right to be treated as innocent until proven guilty. President Lula da Silva is accused of crimes in absence of any hard evidence against him. Yet, a narrow majority of the Supreme Court denied his petition of Habeas Corpus, a decision that goes against the 1988 National Constitution. Lula now faces a twelve-year jail sentence and disqualification from the presidential race.

The High Court's decision follows a direct threat of military intervention by a retired general of the Brazilian Army, and an aggressive campaign by Rede Globo, Brazil's largest television network. The New York Times and other corporate media suggest that Lula's prosecution advances the anti-corruption cause. However, Brazil's unelected President Michel Temer and several of his political allies who are accused of graft and other crimes have received softer treatment from Brazilian prosecutors. Despite hard evidence against Temer, Senator Aécio Neves, and other supporters of the 2016 institutional coup against democratically elected President Dilma Rousseff, these politicians are not facing imminent incarceration.

We, alongside popular movements, labor and progressive organizations in Brazil, can only view this as a politically driven intervention in the forthcoming presidential election and a severe blow to Brazil's already weakened democracy.

We join the people in Brazil in their defense of President Lula da Silva's right to justice under the law, against interference by the military, and in defense of free and fair elections. At stake is not only the freedom of a leading champion of democracy in Brazil, but the future of Brazilian democracy itself.