



Red Flag Alert for Genocide

BRAZIL

Released 21 October 2022

On October 30, 2022, Brazilian voters will take to the polls for a historic and critically important election between two presidential candidates: incumbent Jair Bolsonaro and challenger (and former president) Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Polls have predicted that Bolsonaro, a far-right populist and possibly one of the most radical leaders in Latin America, will lose against Lula, but Bolsonaro has hinted that he may contest an electoral loss.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing a Red Flag Alert for Brazil, since the policies pursued by its next president could determine the existential fate of many of Brazil's indigenous groups and, with them, the fate of the Amazon rainforest and the future of humanity. Bolsonaro's dehumanizing language and genocidal environmental policies towards the Brazilian indigenous population are of particular concern. The continuation of these policies over the next four years would be disastrous.

Bolsonaro's violently aggressive platform as president has rolled back the rights of minorities, women, and the LGBTQIA+ community in Brazil. His systematic destruction of the Amazon rainforest has caused irreparable damage to the indigenous groups who live there. This violence is part of his well-documented racism against Brazil's indigenous population. Bolsonaro once praised the United States Army for its "efficiency" in "exterminating" indigenous people in the United States. He has claimed that the protection of indigenous lands blocks the development of commercial agriculture, and he openly expresses his belief that indigenous people are less than human. Murders of indigenous leaders and activists, violent land invasions, illegal construction and mining on protected lands, and widespread burning of the Amazon have increased exponentially since Bolsonaro assumed the office in early 2019.

Perhaps the most arresting symbol of the state violence against Brazil's indigenous population is the lonely death of the 'Man of the Hole' in August 2022; who was the sole surviving member of an unknown tribe from Brazil's Tanaru Indigenous Territory. The other members of his tribe were killed in a series of attacks by ranchers between the 1970s and 1996, the purpose of which was to eliminate the Amazon's indigenous population in order to open up land for resource extraction. His story is the first recorded instance of the total genocide of an uncontacted tribe, underscoring the stakes of the present moment in Brazilian history.

The Lemkin Institute commends the indigenous communities who made their voices heard by protesting Jair Bolsonaro's genocidal rhetoric and actions outside the United Nations

headquarters in New York City during his address before the General Assembly. The international community should heed the message of these activists and support increased aid to indigenous communities. The protection of the Amazon is crucial to the survival of the planet, but the first to be affected by the destruction of the forest are the indigenous people who call it home.