

SIGN-ON LETTER: Urge Sec. Kerry to Support Democracy in Brazil

Deadline Extended - Now Friday, July 22, COB

Current signers (33): Conyers, Ellison, Kaptur, Lewis, Lee (CA), McGovern, Grijalva, McDermott, Cummings, Johnson (GA), Grayson, Pocan, Waters, Jackson Lee, Holmes Norton, Farr, Cohen, Schakowsky, Honda, E.B. Johnson, Serrano, Rush, Cicilline, DeLauro, Edwards, Brown, Bishop (GA), Thompson (MS), Hastings, Scott (GA), Cleaver, Takano, Kind

Endorsed by: AFL-CIO, United Steelworkers (USW), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), United Auto Workers (UAW), Communication Workers of America (CWA), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), Just Associates (JASS), CISPES, Center For International Policy - Americas Program, Association for Women's Rights in Development, Global Fund for Women, Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, Grassroots International, Grassroots for Global Justice Alliance, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - US Section, Chicago Religious Leadership Network, CATA – The Farmworkers Support Committee, Family Farm Defenders, National Family Farm Coalition, Community to Community, Community Food and Justice Coalition, American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO, Local 3354), Friends of the Earth, WhyHunger, Amazon Watch, Alliance of Baptists, Demand Progress

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in sending the following letter to Secretary of State John Kerry expressing concern regarding recent developments in Brazil and urging the Secretary to call for the respect and protection of Brazil's constitutional democracy.

The letter notes that the legal basis for the ongoing impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff has been widely contested and that there is compelling evidence showing that key promoters of the impeachment campaign are seeking to remove Rousseff so as to contain the investigation of corruption cases that they themselves are implicated in.

Many respected organizations and multilateral bodies have already registered serious concern over both the impeachment process and the recent actions of the interim government, which has announced its intention to dramatically roll back successful social programs and affirmative action initiatives. Here are just a few:

"As the impeachment trial proceeds, the United States can and must speak out publicly and express concerns that the Brazilian Senate respect the institutions and electoral processes in which millions of people participated and chose a government that prioritized policies of fighting poverty and inequality, investing in health care and education, and protecting human rights and worker rights."

- Richard L. Trumka, President of the AFL-CIO, Letter to President Obama, May 20, 2016

"I am writing to you on behalf of the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of Teachers to express deep concern about the political situation currently unfolding in Brazil. It is in the interest of the US government to address the threat that this crisis represents to the democracy of an important and political ally, which has been a champion of social and political inclusion."

- Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, letter to Secretary Kerry, May 26, 2016

"The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) expresses its deep concern over decisions adopted by interim Brazilian president Michel Temer that represent a regression and have a negative impact on the protection and promotion of human rights in the country."

- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, May 18, 2016

"The coup underway in Brazil is an attack on the fragile democracy reinstalled in the country after the end of the military dictatorship, on our social conquests and, above all, on a project for a Brazil with inclusion and economic and social development with sustainability, racial and gender equality and the fight against racism."

- National Coordination of Black Organizations (Brazil), April 20, 2016

Brazil is a major regional power and democratic backsliding there will have negative ripple effects that will be felt throughout Latin America. As such, it is particularly important for our government to avoid any perception that it is supportive of the impeachment process and to voice concern about both the circumstances surrounding the process and some of the recent actions of the interim government, which signal a radical departure from the policies that the people of Brazil voted for in the last national elections.

If you have any questions, or would like to sign on, please contact Erik Sperling in Rep. Conyers' office by emailing Erik.Sperling@mail.house.gov or calling 5-5126.

Sincerely,

John Conyers, Jr.	Marcy Kaptur	Keith Ellison
Member of Congress	Member of Congress	Member of Congress

DRAFT TEXT OF LETTER [WITH HYPERLINKS TO SOURCES]:

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write to express our deep concern regarding recent developments in Brazil that we believe threaten that country's democratic institutions. We urge you to exercise the utmost caution in your dealings with Brazil's interim authorities and to refrain from statements or actions that might be interpreted as supportive of the impeachment campaign launched against President Dilma Rousseff. Our government should express strong concern regarding the circumstances surrounding the impeachment process and call for the protection of constitutional democracy and the rule of law in Brazil.

As you are aware, Brazil's legislature recently voted to suspend President Dilma Rousseff and a pending Senate trial could result in her permanent removal from office. This is not a legal trial, but a political one, where a two-thirds majority vote by a Senate [riddled with corruption](#) can end President Rousseff's tenure. The circumstances surrounding these impeachment proceedings and the recent actions taken by Brazil's interim government have generated enormous controversy both in Brazil and [internationally](#). The impeachment process has come under fire for procedural irregularities, corruption, and political motivations from its beginning. The U.S. government should express concern about the threat to democratic institutions unfolding in a country that is one of our most important political and economic allies in the region, and the world's fifth most populous country as well as Latin America's largest economy.

With President Rousseff's suspension, Vice President Michel Temer ascended to power and immediately replaced a progressive, diverse and representative administration with one that contains only white men who have announced plans to impose [austerity](#), [privatization](#) and a [far right social agenda](#). Their actions include the [elimination of the Ministry for women, racial equality and human rights](#) (replacing them with weak Secretariats subordinated to the Justice Ministry), and the announcement of major funding reductions for social programs and poverty reduction, prompting statements of concern from the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) and other groups.

Brazil remains deeply divided along income lines, yet, the new cabinet has supported an agenda of [sharp reductions to public services](#) and extensive [public pension and labor reforms](#) with potentially deeply adverse effects on the poorest and most vulnerable. Again, these sharp reversals in government policy are conducted by a government with no popular mandate and which has come to power through extremely dubious means.

In his first 30 days in office, Michel Temer lost three of his chosen ministers to corruption charges, including a close ally, Romero Jucá, President of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party. Mr. Jucá [stepped down](#) after Brazil's largest newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo [released a taped conversation of](#)

[him plotting the impeachment](#) of President Dilma Rousseff to install Temer in her place as a way to shut down a massive corruption investigation. To make matters worse, many of the politicians who support this impeachment process [currently face allegations of serious crimes](#) such as corruption, embezzlement and even attempted homicide. This includes Mr. Temer, who was found guilty of campaign finance violations and is [banned from running for any political office](#), including the one he now holds, for eight years once he leaves office.

President Rousseff herself has never been formally charged with corruption and the impeachment claims are not based on corruption allegations. Instead, she is accused of using money from public banks to temporarily cover budget gaps. Whether appropriate or not it is a [widely used practice](#) at all levels of Brazilian government, including by her two predecessors. This fuels allegations that the impeachment proceedings against President Rousseff are politically motivated. Beyond that, however, they are also seen as an opportunity for the interim president to impose a political agenda which reflects the views of the opposition, not of the elected President.

Finally, we are concerned that, rather than showing concern regarding these troubling developments, our government has sent signals that could be interpreted as supportive of the impeachment campaign. Because many Brazilians have labeled the impeachment process as a [“coup”](#) against the country’s elected president, it is especially important that U.S. actions not be perceived as supportive of impeachment. We note, for instance, that on April 19 – just two days after the lower house voted to impeach President Rousseff – Brazilian senator Aloysio Nunes, a key backer of the impeachment campaign, [met with one of the State Department’s most senior officials](#): Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon. In Brazil, this meeting was widely interpreted as a gesture of support for the removal of President Rousseff from office.

Furthermore, we are dismayed to note that, to date, State Department officials have limited themselves to expressing confidence in the democratic process in Brazil, without noting some of the very obvious concerns regarding the impeachment process and actions taken by the interim government. We urge you to join others in the region and express concern regarding these recent events and support stability, constitutional democracy and the rule of law in Brazil.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress