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Lula da Silva says Brazil needs more education, not more guns

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Brasilia, May 13 (RHC)-- In an interview aired by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva warned that his country's problems will not be solved by governmental decisions that facilitate the use of weapons instead of promoting education.

The Workers' Party leader said that Brazil's current president, Jair Bolsonaro, "barbarously defends an armed, police state. In his head, a weapon solves everyone's problem. He has just authorized that farmers can use guns and shoot anyone they want." Lula added the Bolsonaro "is sick and believes that Brazil's problems will be solved with weapons. Brazil's problems will be solved with books, with schools," stressed the left-leaning politician.

The criticism came just days after former Brazilian Army captain Bolsonaro signed a decree authorizing truck drivers, legislators, journalists, private security agents, lawyers and others to carry weapons in public places. This executive order will allow some 19.1 million citizens to request firearm licenses, according to Souda Paz Institute, an NGO dedicated to promoting a peace culture in Brazil.

On Wednesday, the current far-right administration also announced it would "block" 30 percent of the national budget already allocated to universities and research institutes from receiving their funds. This budget cut immediately moved thousands of Brazilian professors, students and scientists to protest and plan for a nationwide strike against social security reforms set for May 15.??????

Regarding the repression of young people and students, Lula pointed out in the exclusive interview that "for the wellbeing of Brazil, I hope [Bolsonaro] learns. Instead of talking nonsense, Bolsonaro should say the following: 'I will finish my term term being better than Lula, I will create more universities, I will invest more in science and technology, I will enroll more children in school.'"

During the interview, the 73-year-old politician and political prisoner answered several questions about the corruption allegations used to send him to jail for eight years, down from his original 12-year sentenced ruled on in 2018.

"The only thing that interests me is to prove my innocence and I will fight for it until my last days," Lula said and commented that, besides being politically motivated, his trial was wrought with legal irregularities. No actual evidence against the ex-president was ever presented in court, just testimonies against him.??????

Since April 7, 2018, Lula has been imprisoned at a Curitiba's federal prison convicted of allegedly receiving a luxurious beach apartment from Odebrecht, a Brazilian construction company in exchange for contracts with Petrobras, a state-owned oil company.

Lula recalled that many opposition politicians wrongly thought he was going to leave Brazil before being arrested. "I decided to stay in my country. If they want me in Curitiba, I will be there," he said and thanked "those wonderful people who are out there," referring to the thousands of Brazilians supporters who have been in permanent mobilization and solidarity since his imprisonment in April 2018.

Brazil's Federal Supreme Court recently ruled to allow Lula to be interviewed. This was his first broadcast interview originally set to be aired on RedeTV, but the Brazilian media outlet changed course last week, allegedly pressured by the Bolsonaro administration.

Edited by Ed Newman

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