
Brazil Civil Suit Aims to Ban Rousseff Rival Cunha for 10 Years

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Eduardo Cunha is accused of receiving millions of dollars in kickbacks as part of the Petrobras fraud scheme and hiding the money in Swiss bank accounts.

The political future of suspended lower house speaker and impeachment mastermind [Eduardo Cunha](#) remains in limbo as prosecutors have called for a 10-year ban on the politician while a congressional ethics committee is set to vote on Tuesday on whether to strip the opposition lawmaker's immunity for lying about secret Swiss bank accounts he used to launder bribes.

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Federal prosecutors involved in investigations into corruption in the state oil firm Petrobras filed a civil lawsuit against Cunha and his wife on Monday, the Brazilian daily O Globo reported.

The lawsuit accuses Cunha of taking advantage of his elected position to "obtain illegal benefits" through a fraud scheme and seeks the return of some US\$5.7 million in public funds. The prosecutors also called for Cunha to be stripped of his political rights for the next 10 years.

Former Petrobras director Jorge Luiz Zelada, lobbyist for Cunha's PMDB party Joao Augusto Rezende Henriques, and Portuguese business mogul Idalecio Oliveira are also targets of the new lawsuit, according to O Globo.

Oliveira, revealed in the Panama Papers as the owner of a conglomerate of 14 companies registered in the British Virgin islands from 2003 to 2011, [reportedly wired US\\$10 million to a Swiss bank](#) account held by Rezende Henriques in 2011. The PMDB lobbyist then wired US\$1.5 million to Cunha's Swiss account shortly after.

The transfer was one of more than over US\$5 million Cunha is accused of hiding in Swiss accounts.

Cunha, who has denied wrongdoing, called the civil lawsuit "absurd" in a statement and vowed to challenge it, O

Globo reported. He also accused prosecutors of looking to “create facts” ahead of the decision in the congressional ethics committee on his conduct on Tuesday.

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Cunha, a key architect in painting the impeachment process as a campaign to root out government corruption despite himself facing multi-million dollar bribery and fraud charges, was [suspended from his post as chief of the lower house](#) by the Supreme Court over accusations of intimidating lawmakers and hampering investigations. His suspension came just weeks after the lower house approved moving the impeachment process in a raucous marathon session.

Suspended President Dilma Rousseff and her defense have argued that Cunha misused his power as speaker of the lower house in seeking her ouster as a form of political revenge.

However, Rousseff’s attorney Jose Eduardo Cardozo has argued that recently [leaked wiretap recordings](#) have offered a “clear” indication of a “strong coordinated component” in the plan to remove Rousseff from office that extends accusations of the misuse of power beyond Cunha.

Cunha, a controversial public figure and staunch rival of Rousseff, is the only sitting lawmaker to be [charged for corruption](#) by the Supreme Court in the Petrobras scandal.
