
Brazil's Lula Seeks UN Help against "Judicial Persecution"

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BRASILIA – Attorneys for Brazil's former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva filed a motion on Thursday with the UN Human Rights Council accusing authorities in the South American nation of mounting a "judicial persecution" of their client in the course of a corruption probe.

The former head of state's Lula Institute said the brief was presented by prominent British human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson, who has represented boxer Mike Tyson and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

"Lula is bringing his case at the UN because he cannot get justice in Brazil under its inquisitorial system," the attorney said in a video released by the institute.

"His telephones are being tapped, as are those of his family and his lawyers and the intercept transcripts, even the audio transcripts, are being released for publication by a politically hostile media," Robertson said.

The judge handling the case, Sergio Moro, apologized in March for having released intercepts of phone conversations between Lula and his successor, Dilma Rousseff.

Moro, a self-described "attack judge," has gained prominence in Brazil for overseeing the investigation into the massive graft scheme at state oil company Petrobras, a \$2 billion scandal that has ensnared top company executives and dozens of politicians from all major parties.

The magistrate accuses Lula of involvement in the corruption at Petrobras, charges the former president flatly denies.

"It is very important to fight corruption but only if it is fought fairly," Robertson said Thursday after acknowledging Moro's reputation.

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"This case will expose the problem of pre-trial detention in Brazil and the problem of wrongful convictions based on confessions by suspects who just want to get out of prison," the lawyer said in regard to the ability of Brazilian judges to order defendants held indefinitely before trial.

The approach to the UN Human Rights Council comes amid rumors that Moro will order Lula's arrest before the Aug. 5 start of the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

The 70-year-old Lula, who played a major role in the bringing the Games to Brazil, announced earlier this week that he would not take part in the inaugural ceremony.

Also planning to skip the event is Rousseff, who was suspended in May pending a trial in the Senate on removing her from office on accusations she manipulated budget figures to minimize the size of the deficit.
