
Brazil's Lula Faces More Charges and Possible Imprisonment

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The top court also approved a request by prosecutors to split the investigation of dozens of politicians implicated in the sprawling Petrobras corruption scandal by grouping them by the main parties that prosecutors allege received kickbacks.

In a decision made public on Thursday, Supreme Court Justice Teori Zavascki agreed to the request by Brazil's chief prosecutor Rodrigo Janot that the investigation be divided into four probes focusing on the Workers Party (PT), which was ousted from government in August, the Progressive Party (PP) and the PMDB in the Senate and in the lower chamber.

Justice Teori Zavascki authorized the inclusion of Lula into the list of PT politicians under investigation for alleged membership in the embezzlement ring at the state-run oil company. According to a report by Cuba Debate, the Supreme Court also approved a resolution that would see those charged to be held in preventative detention as their case proceeds.

Should Sergio Moro — the controversial judge overseeing the corruption probe — decide to proceed with the case against Lula, the former president could be jailed.

That would spell disaster for Lula's political future, as it would limit his ability to run in presidential elections in 2018.

Lula, who denies all wrongdoing, has previously said that his persecution is driven by political interests who want to prevent his candidacy.

However, the court's decision to approve the separation of the investigation by political parties is also seen as bad news for de facto President Michel Temer because it will focus the investigation directly on politicians of his Brazilian Democratic Movement Party.

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Among the politicians who will be under the new spotlight is the leader of the Senate, Renan Calheiros, whose help Temer needs to pass an austerity program through Congress.

In an earlier announcement, police said Lula will face additional charges connected to a case involving contracts obtained by building and engineering conglomerate Odebrecht in Angola. Under Brazilian law, only prosecutors can formally charge someone after a police investigation and those charges must then be approved by a judge.

Lula has already been charged twice in connection to a massive anti-corruption investigation centered on state oil company Petrobras.

The former president's defense team criticized the leak of the charges to the press and said it was another example of the "media massacre campaign to make headlines in the press and try to destroy the image of the most popular former president in the country's history."
