

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 24, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20451

Secretary Rubio:

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding the Administration's coordinated effort to threaten our strategic alliance with Brazil and undermine the Western Hemisphere's second-largest democracy ahead of its upcoming presidential election in October 2026.

Over the course of President Trump's second term, we have seen U.S. officials engage in a sustained, multifaceted campaign of interference and destabilization in Brazil. This effort first escalated sharply during the summer of 2025, with the Administration deploying a barrage of tariffs and targeted sanctions to attempt to shape the Brazilian Supreme Court's verdict in the trial of former President Jair Bolsonaro on charges of attempting to foment a military coup to stay in power.¹ The Trump Administration's actions constituted an extraordinary infringement on Brazil's national sovereignty and a blatant attempt to pressure Brazilian authorities over an ongoing judicial proceeding.

Despite some subsequent measure of deescalation in the months that followed, including direct and cordial talks between Presidents Trump and Lula, the broader pressure campaign directed at Brazil's authorities resumed with the appointment of Darren Beattie as a senior advisor on Brazil issues in the State Department.² Beattie, a noted far-right extremist and white supremacist, came into this post with a clear record of public statements signaling an overt ideological commitment to undermining Brazil's democratic institutions.³ More recently, the Administration again targeted Brazilian imports with steep tariffs following what appears to have been a politically-motivated Section 301 investigation by the U.S. Trade Representative.⁴ The investigation was expressly initiated at President Trump's direction at the same moment that he publicly criticized Brazilian court actions against former President Bolsonaro and U.S. social media companies.⁵

The Administration's most recent actions point toward an apparent effort to interfere with, and potentially undermine, Brazil's general election in October. Senator and presidential candidate Flávio Bolsonaro's recent Oval Office meeting with President Trump, held as he sought to contain the fallout from a domestic political scandal, underscored the Administration's willingness to insert itself directly as a central actor in the election, to the clear detriment of the U.S.-

¹ France 24, *Trump Slaps Massive Tariffs, Sanctions on Brazil over Bolsonaro Trial* (July 31, 2025), <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20250731-trump-slaps-massive-tariffs-sanctions-on-brazil-over-bolsonaro-trial>

² Stephen Quillen, *Trump Meets Brazil's Lula at ASEAN Summit, Touts 'Pretty Good Deals'* (October 26, 2025), Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/26/trump-meets-brazils-lula-at-asean-summit-touts-pretty-good-deals> ; Ana Ionova, *A New Trump Envoy Stirs Fears of U.S. Interference in Brazil's Elections* (March 13, 2026), The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/13/world/middleeast/brazil-election-darren-beattie-trump.html>

³ Aishvarya Kavi, *Fired Speechwriter From First Trump Term Appointed to Lead the Institute of Peace* (July 25, 2025), The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/25/admin/darren-beattie-institute-of-peace.html>

⁴ Al Jazeera, *US to Impose New 25 Percent Tariffs on Some Brazilian Imports* (July 16, 2026), <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2026/7/16/us-to-impose-new-25-percent-tariffs-on-some-brazilian-imports>

⁵ Kanishka Singh and Ricardo Brito, *Trump Imposes 50% Tariffs on Brazil After Spat with Lula* (July 9, 2025), Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/trump-says-us-will-charge-brazil-with-50-tariff-2025-07-09/>

Brazil bilateral relationship and U.S. interests more broadly.⁶ During that meeting, Senator Bolsonaro reportedly requested that the U.S. designate two Brazilian gangs as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs). Two days later, the State Department announced that the gangs would be officially labeled FTOs.⁷

Brazil's authorities, who have repeatedly proposed expanding U.S.-Brazil cooperation against transnational organized crime, have expressed concerns that this designation could be invoked as justification for extraterritorial actions against Brazilian institutions, including punitive financial measures, such as tariffs or sanctions.⁸ Given the Trump Administration's repeated military strikes in the region, justified in part by alleged FTO threats to U.S. security, the designation has also fueled fears of potential U.S. military intervention. Brazilians have also not forgotten White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt's extraordinary comments last fall in which she suggested that Brazil could face the United States' "military might."⁹

In addition, we are alarmed by media reports surrounding the attempted official visit to Brazil by two U.S. State Department officials, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Riley M. Barnes and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Samuel Samson.¹⁰ According to reporting, the U.S. delegation had planned to visit the Brazilian capital and cast doubt on the integrity of the country's voting system, considered by many experts to be among the most reliable in the world.¹¹ Due to their planned interference in Brazil's electoral process, they were denied entry into the country. In a retaliatory move, the Administration revoked the visa of Brazil's Ambassador to the United States—a measure normally reserved for representatives of adversarial or hostile governments.¹² Taken together, the Administration's actions constitute repeated attacks on a critical ally and raise concerns that the United States could conduct even greater forms of interference and destabilization in the Western Hemisphere's second largest democracy in the weeks and months ahead.

The contrast with the United States' approach during Brazil's previous presidential election could not be clearer. In the run-up to that election, members of Congress and the White House signaled strongly and publicly to then-President Bolsonaro, the Brazilian military, and then-President Bolsonaro's political allies, that the United States would oppose any

⁶ Folha de S.Paulo, *Flávio Bolsonaro Meets Trump and Says He Asked to Classify PCC and CV as Terrorist Groups* (May 27, 2026), <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/world/2026/05/flavio-bolsonaro-meets-trump-and-says-he-asked-to-classify-pcc-and-cv-as-terrorist-groups.shtml>; Laura Intrieri, *Lula abre vantagem sobre Flávio no 2º turno após caso 'Dark Horse', aponta Meio Ideia* (May 28, 2026), Folha de S.Paulo, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2026/05/lula-abre-vantagem-sobre-flavio-no-2o-turno-apos-caso-dark-horse-aponta-meio-ideia.shtml>

⁷ Ana Ionova, *After New Push by the Bolsonaros, U.S. Labels Brazilian Gangs as Terrorist Groups* (May 28, 2026), The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/28/world/americas/brazil-gangs-terrorist-bolsonaro-trump.html>

⁸ Eléonore Hughes, *Brazil's Lula to Discuss Fighting Organized Crime, Tariffs in Trump Meeting* (May 6, 2026), Associated Press, <https://apnews.com/article/brazil-lula-trump-meeting-8f17492d981f99b74f4b37a6d9def2ea>.

⁹ Ja'han Jones, *"Karoline Leavitt Floats Threats of 'Military Might' over Bolsonaro Coup Trial"* (September 10, 2025), MS NOW, <https://www.ms.now/top-stories/latest/trump-bolsonaro-trial-brazil-military-might-rcna230388>

¹⁰ Marina Dias, Terrence McCoy, and Samantha Schmidt, *Brazil Denies Visas to U.S. Delegation Aiming to Impugn Election System, Officials Say* (July 25, 2026), The Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/07/24/us-sending-envoys-question-brazilian-electoral-system-officials-say/>

¹¹ Ibid; The Carter Center, *Carter Center Electoral Expert Mission Concludes Assessment and Issues Initial Key Findings* (November 4, 2022), <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/brazil-110422/>; Conectas Human Rights, *What International Observers Said About the First Round of Elections in Brazil* (October 20, 2022), <https://conectas.org/en/noticias/what-international-observers-said-about-the-first-round-of-elections-in-brazil/>

¹² Matthew Lee and Mauricio Savarese, *Trump Administration Revokes Visa of Brazil's Ambassador to US in Spat with Lula* (August 4, 2026), Associated Press, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-brazil-lula-ambassador-diplomats-4d7f64110fff5dda2ffd374d5e52c682>

effort to block or overturn the will of Brazilian voters.¹³ Immediately following the announcement of the election results, the United States moved swiftly—in coordination with allies and partners throughout the region, across Europe, and around the world—to recognize President Lula's victory, helping to deny legitimacy to efforts to contest or reverse the outcome.¹⁴ Following the January 8, 2023, attacks on Brazil's democratic institutions, the United States stood firmly with Brazil's newly elected government and played a critical role in rallying support across the region for Brazil's efforts to defend its hard-won 1988 constitution and the democratic institutions it established.¹⁵

Today, however, we face a fundamentally different reality. Rather than helping defend Brazilian democracy, the United States is acting as an agent of interference and destabilization—using diplomatic, economic, and political pressure in ways that risk weakening the country's democratic institutions, undermining confidence in Brazil's electoral process, and inflicting further damage on our relationship with a strategic U.S. ally and trading partner. These actions reflect a broader and deeply troubling pattern of interference by the Trump Administration in recent electoral processes across Latin America, as seen during Argentina's midterm elections and the presidential elections in Honduras and Colombia. This pattern risks not only undermining the integrity of electoral processes in individual countries but also progressively eroding electorates' confidence in democratic processes and institutions across the region.

Particularly given the tragic history of U.S. involvement in the 1964 military coup against Brazil's democratically elected government at the time, as well as subsequent U.S. support for the resulting military dictatorship, the United States has a responsibility to support the democratic institutions that so many Brazilians, across generations, struggled to build.

In light of the Administration's actions up to this point, we submit the following requests and questions:

- Provide the Department's methodology for reviewing and evaluating submissions, petitions, or materials related to potential sanctions designations submitted by foreign nationals or unregistered foreign agents, in furtherance of Executive Order 14323.
- Provide a detailed explanation of the evidentiary and legal standards the Department utilized to determine that Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes met the statutory criteria for designation under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, given the unprecedented nature of sanctioning a jurist in a democratic partner nation.
- Provide the Administration's justification for designating the Brazilian criminal gangs CV and PCC as foreign terrorist organizations, over the objections of the Lula Administration and despite its repeated proposals to expand U.S.-Brazil cooperation to address transnational criminal organizations.
- Describe how the Department coordinates its democracy and human rights objectives with regional partners in the Western Hemisphere, particularly regarding technical assistance or monitoring of electoral and judicial processes.
- Provide the Administration's rationale for revoking the visa of Brazil's ambassador to Washington, a measure widely seen as an extraordinary escalation that departs from normal practice between friendly states.
- Will the Administration commit to respecting Brazil's electoral process, which is widely regarded as one of the most secure and reliable in the world¹⁶?

¹³ Ryan Cooper, *How Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders Helped Lula Win* (November 1, 2022), The American Prospect, <https://prospect.org/2022/11/01/how-joe-biden-and-bernie-sanders-helped-lula-win/>

¹⁴ Reuters, *Biden Congratulates Lula for Winning 'Free, Fair' Brazil Election* (October 30, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/biden-congratulates-lula-winning-free-fair-brazil-election-2022-10-30/>

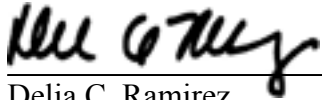
¹⁵ Prime Minister of Canada, *Joint Statement by President Joe Biden, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Brazil* (January 9, 2023), <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2023/01/09/joint-statement-president-joe-biden-president-andres-manuel-lopez>

¹⁶ V-Dem (2026) – processed by Our World in Data. “Free and fair elections index – V-Dem” [dataset]. V-Dem, “Democracy report v16” [original data]. Retrieved September 8, 2026 from <https://archive.ourworldindata.org/20260806-091206/grapher/free-and-fair-elections-index.html> (archived on August 6, 2026).

- Will the Administration commit to recognizing the certified outcome of Brazil's 2026 democratic elections and to upholding standard diplomatic relations with whichever candidate is legitimately chosen by the Brazilian electorate?

We ask for substantive answers to these requests and questions by no later than **October 1, 2026**.

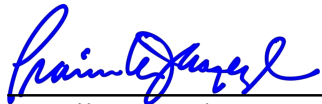
Sincerely,



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



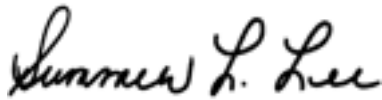
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



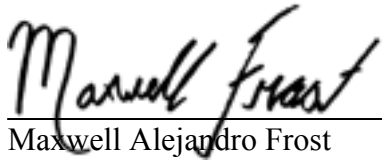
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



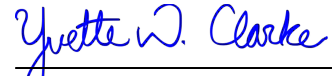
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



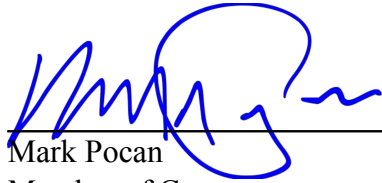
André Carson
Member of Congress



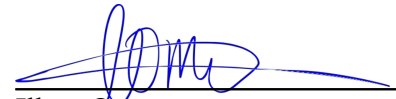
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



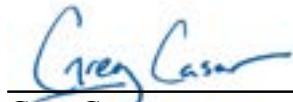
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



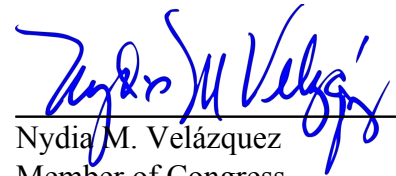
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



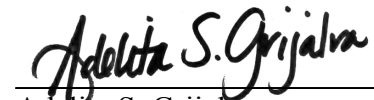
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



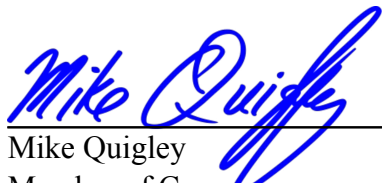
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



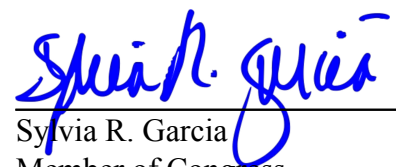
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



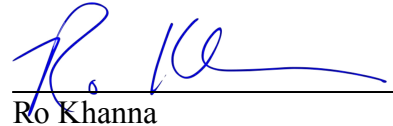
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



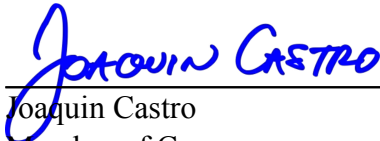
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



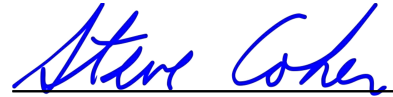
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



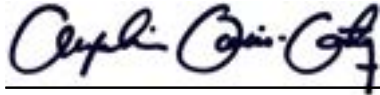
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress