

Flávio Bolsonaro Refuses to Recognize the Election Result from the United States and Declares Himself "Leader of Brazil"

SE/Sergio Rivera

Miami, October 28, 2026. Flávio Bolsonaro, defeated in the second round of Brazil's presidential election, published an open letter from the United States in which he refuses to recognize Lula's victory, accuses the election of "fraud" without evidence, and declares himself "leader of Brazil." The escape came after the Supreme Court ordered him to surrender his passport in connection with a money-laundering investigation, and was facilitated by Javier Milei's Argentine government in coordination with Donald Trump's administration. Behind the episode lies a strategic reading: Lula's victory thwarted the most important piece of Trump's "Donroe Doctrine" in Latin America.

To read what follows, it is worth distinguishing three levels: the factual accusations, the judicial proceedings, and the judicial conclusions. The inferences about Trump's strategy are the author's own and rest on the historical experience of U.S. policy toward the region; they are presented as such, not as established facts.

I. Why Brazil Is Irreplaceable in the "Donroe Doctrine"

The central logic of the "Donroe Doctrine" is to restore U.S. hemispheric dominance in the Western Hemisphere, specifically excluding the influence of China and Russia. In that strategy, Brazil is not "just another country" but the most important piece:

- **Economic scale and resources:** Brazil is Latin America's largest economy and holds the world's second-largest reserves of rare earths (after China), in addition to being a key supplier of strategic minerals for semiconductors, renewable energy, and defense. The Trump administration hoped to secure preferential access to those resources through a friendly Brazilian government.
- **Containing China:** China is already Brazil's largest trading partner, with an export volume roughly three times that of the United States. If Brazil under Lula continues to deepen its cooperation with the BRICS and with China, the United States loses a crucial foothold in the competition for influence in South America.
- **Regional demonstration effect:** In early 2026, the United States had already taken direct military action against Venezuela, capturing Maduro, which showed that the "Donroe Doctrine" is not mere rhetoric. If Brazil could also be brought into the U.S.-led "Shield of the Americas," U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere would be significantly consolidated. Lula's victory means that objective cannot be achieved over the next four years.

That is why the notion that "losing Brazil is no paper tiger" is consistent with the facts. According to BBC analysis citing Chatham House experts, Trump regarded Brazil as "the tenth and greatest trophy" after Flávio's first-round victory. That trophy has now slipped away.



II. The Real State of the "Meta Intervention": Accusations and Proceedings, but No Judicial Conclusion

This part requires careful distinction between levels, so that suspicion does not become established fact.

Confirmed facts:

- Lula's campaign filed a complaint with Brazil's Superior Electoral Court (TSE), accusing Meta of restricting the spread of content related to Lula while favoring Flávio's content.
- The TSE ordered Meta to ensure equal treatment of both candidates within 24 hours, under penalty of a daily fine of 500,000 reais.
- Meta's AI chatbot did indeed refuse to generate campaign images with "Lula," "PT," and "13," but did generate content with "Flávio," "PL," and "22."
- The Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo* cited "internal communications" according to which Meta employees discussed restrictions on Lula's Instagram account, while the algorithm recommended Flávio's account. Lula's campaign claimed that roughly 1.3 million people were unable to see its ads because of restrictions.
- The NGO CTRL+Z collected more than a thousand cases of "restrictions and blocks" on Meta platforms, of which "90% were content favorable to Lula or of a progressive bent."

Meta's version:

- Meta denies "taking sides" in the Brazilian election or in any election, and calls the accusations "false and baseless."
- It attributes the problems to "technical failures," including a system-identification error that blocked Lula's ad account for more than an hour on September 23.
- It says it has implemented a manual review mechanism: any automatic block or restriction of presidential campaign ad accounts must be manually assessed within two hours.

The judicial position:

TSE judge Marco Aurélio Bellizze stated explicitly that "there is currently insufficient evidence to determine that Meta intentionally manipulated the distribution of content" to favor or harm any candidate, though he considered it necessary to establish a protective mechanism to preserve electoral fairness.

Therefore, "electoral manipulation by Meta" is a credible accusation with supporting indications—the AI images are particularly concrete—but it is not yet a legal conclusion. In the article it can be used as "evidence of suspicion," not as "established fact."

III. The "Second Guaidó" Hypothesis

The speculation has internal logic, but it requires distinguishing between intention and capacity.

Elements that support it:

- Trump called the Brazilian elections "rigged" after Lula's victory, saying they "looked very corrupt." That provides narrative backing for Flávio's self-declaration as "legitimate leader."
- Flávio himself compared himself to Guaidó, Edmundo González, and María Corina Machado in his letter, presenting them as "legitimate leaders" facing a "tyranny."
- The appointment of Guaidó in Venezuela in 2019 set a precedent: the United States can attempt to delegitimize electoral results by creating a "parallel presidency" and pressuring the existing government.

Elements that weaken it:

- **Flávio's party did not back him.** The Liberal Party (PL) has already recognized the election results. The PL's Senate leader, Rogério Marinho, stated explicitly: "The Liberal Party cannot make that claim (electoral fraud). There is no evidence."
- **Trump did not commit himself.** Asked whether he would take action, he replied: "I don't run in Brazil, I run in the United States." He also said, "I like Lula, I get along very well with him." That is an evasive stance, not an absolute endorsement of Flávio.
- **Guaidó's situation is not replicable.** Guaidó's "interim presidency" was recognized by dozens of countries, and Venezuela was then going through a severe crisis of governmental legitimacy. Brazil has no such vacuum: the legitimacy of its electoral process was recognized by international observers, Flávio's party recognized the results, and Lula will officially begin his fourth term. An "exile government" with no domestic or external recognition has no operational basis.

A more reasonable inference is that what Trump wants is not necessarily a "Guaidó," but rather to keep Flávio as an opposition foothold, exerting continuous pressure on Lula on trade, rare-earth, and technology issues (such as the Pix payment system). Letting Flávio call himself "leader" costs Trump minimal, but it can create a point of friction in U.S.-Brazil relations. Whether this becomes a "Guaidó" depends on whether Trump is willing to pay the diplomatic cost of recognizing a "parallel president"; for now, his willingness seems limited, though with Trump one never knows.

IV. The Argentine Front: Milei as Facilitator, Not Bystander

1. Milei was not a passive bystander but an active facilitator. According to reports in Argentine media, Milei's government coordinated secretly with the Trump administration on Flávio's departure through Argentine territory. An Argentine official stated: "Milei was aware, the rest were not. He worked in coordination with Trump." Presidential adviser Santiago Caputo was present in Puerto Iguazú on the night of the takeoff, a detail that Argentine media interpret as confirmation of

government involvement. Mexican lawyer Simón Levy, a close associate of the Bolsonaro family, stated: "Thanks to President Milei, Flávio Bolsonaro is alive today... He has been and was part of the coordination of this whole operation."



2. The escape deepens a diplomatic crisis that already existed. The Lula-Milei relationship had already been strained since August, when Milei called Lula a "thief and inmate" and minister Alexandre de Moraes "bald garbage." Brazil responded by recalling its ambassador and did not send its own to Buenos Aires, effectively suspending the normal diplomatic channel. Flávio's escape through Argentina aggravates that picture. Lula's government reacted with extreme caution: a Brazilian government source said that "for now we are only focused on investigating what happened," and Lula limited himself to joking that for the Bolsonaro family "Brazil is their second country, the first is the United States."

3. Argentina's silence on Lula's victory is part of the same pattern. Argentine presidential spokesman Adrián Ravier announced that Argentina would not issue any statement congratulating Lula, falsely arguing that Lula had not congratulated Milei in 2023. That gesture, together with the facilitation of the escape, confirms that Milei aligned his policy toward Brazil with Trump's strategy.

V. Summary

From the perspective of the "Donroe Doctrine," Lula's victory means the United States has lost the most important piece in the competition for influence in Latin America. The Meta intervention was accused and judicially examined, but the Brazilian court ultimately determined that "there is insufficient evidence to determine intentional manipulation," and it was foreseeable that Meta would deny it.

Flávio's self-declaration as "legitimate leader" and his comparison with Guaidó are part of Trump's strategy to maintain pressure on Lula, but the PL's recognition of the results and Trump's evasive stance indicate that a "second Guaidó" currently lacks operational conditions. Trump may be more inclined to use Flávio as an opposition foothold and bargaining chip, rather than betting on a "parallel government" with low returns.

It remains to be seen whether this defeat in Brazil is a tactical setback or the beginning of a retreat of the Donroe Doctrine; the coming election dates in the region will be the thermometer.

Note: The above information is based on reports from multiple media outlets (EFE, RTVE, Xinhua, AFP, etc.) on the events of October 27 and 28, 2026. The verbatim quotations from Flávio's letter come from his publication on the X platform, reproduced by various media. The inferences about Trump's strategy are the author's own and rest on the historical experience of U.S. policy toward Latin America.

Press information and contact:
Südaka Editorial
Web: www.sudaka-editorial.com
Email: info@sudaka-editorial.com

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