

## **Lula: Why they want to condemn me**

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During more than 40 years of public activity, my personal life was permanently investigated -by security agencies, by political opponents, by the press. When I fought for the freedom for workers to organize, I was arrested, condemned as a subversive by the infamous National Security Law of the dictatorship. But they never found a dishonest act on my part.

I know what I did before, during and after being President. I've never done anything illegal, nothing that could tarnish my story. I have governed Brazil with seriousness and dedication, because I knew that a worker could not fail in the Presidency. False accusations launched at me were not exactly aimed at my person, but at the political project that I always represented: a fairer Brazil, with opportunities for all.

On the eve of completing 71 years, I see my name in the center of a real judicial (witch)hunt. They invaded and released my personal accounts, and those of my wife and my children; they bugged my phone calls and spread the content; they broke into my house and removed me to testify, unreasonably and without legal basis. They are looking for a crime with which to accuse me, but have not found one, nor will they find one.

Since this (witch)hunt began in the presidential campaign of 2014, I walk the path of righteousness without giving up on my schedule. I continue traveling the country to meet with trade unions, with social movements and parties to discuss and defend the project of Brazil's transformation. I did not stop to mourn and did not give up the fight for equality and social justice.

In these meetings I renew my faith in the Brazilian people and the future of the country. I see that the memory of our people keeps each achievement realized in the PT governments alive: the Family Scholarship program, the Light for All, the My House, My Life, the new Pronaf (National Program to Strengthen Family Agriculture), the Food Acquisition Program Food, recovery of wages – these together, provided the greatest social advancement of all time.

Our people will not forget the millions of poor and black youth who had access to higher education. Our people will withstand setbacks because Brazil wants more, not fewer rights.

I cannot be silent, however, on the abuses committed by government agents who use the law as a political persecution instrument. Just observe the final stages of the municipal elections to see the (witch)hunt against the PT: the acceptance of a complaint against me, five days after it was presented, and the arrest of two former ministers of my government were spectacular episodes that certainly interfered in the outcome of the election .

I never practiced, authorized or benefited from wrongdoing in Petrobras or any other government sector. Since the election campaign in 2014, they worked to change the narrative about the PT from a party to a "criminal organization" with me as its head. This

idea was hammered relentlessly by headlines, magazine covers, on radio and television. It had to be proven by force, since "there are no facts, but convictions."

I do not rule out that my accusers believe this malicious thesis, perhaps judging others by their own moral code. But it does catch the eye how the disproportion between the embezzled billions investigated and the pointing to the supposed booty "boss", shows the fallacy of the plot.

I notice, too, a dangerous ignorance of law enforcement on the functioning of government and institutions. I came to this conclusion during the statements I gave to the police and prosecutors who did not know how a coalition government works, how an executive order is transmitted, how a bidding process works, how the review and approval happens, both collegiate and technical, how a public bank such as BNDES gets financed.

Moreover, during these testimonies, there were no questions about the hypothesis of the accusation. I really have the impression that these were empty bureaucratic rites to fulfill steps and meet procedural requirements. They definitely were not the real and concrete exercise of the right to defense.

After two years of operations, always cast with fanfare, they failed to find anything to link my name to the embezzlements investigated. Not even a penny not declared in my finances, no front company, no secret account.

For 20 years I have lived in the same apartment in Sao Bernardo. Among the dozens of informer defendants, none said that they had illegal or dishonest dealings with me, despite the insistence of public officials to do so, even as a condition to get benefits.

The levity, the disproportion and lack of legal basis in the charges against me are a surprise and cause indignation, as does the eagerness with which they are processed in court. They no longer care about facts, evidence, and procedural standards. They charge and process me by mere conviction –it's serious that higher courts and agencies do not take action against this abuse.

They accuse me, for example, to have illicitly owned an apartment that never belonged to me- and it didn't belong to me for the simple reason that I did not buy it when I was offered the opportunity, not even after the reforms that obviously would be added to price. Since it's impossible to prove that the property was ever mine, because it never was, they instead accuse me of hiding the purchase in a surreal plot.

They accuse me of corruption for having delivered speeches for companies investigated in the Car Wash Operation. How can I be accused of corruption if, when I started to give lectures in 2011, I am no longer a public servant? And what relationship can there be between Petrobras embezzlements and my presentations, all documented, that I gave for 42 companies and organizations from various sectors, not just the five investigated, for which there were fixed prices charged and taxes collected?

My accusers know I did not steal, I was not corrupt or did not try to obstruct justice, but cannot admit it. They cannot retreat after the massacre they promoted in the media. They became prisoners of lies they created, most often from factitious and barely checked reports. They are condemned to condemn and must believe that if they don't arrest me, they will be discredited.

I try to understand this (witch)hunt as part of the political dispute, although it is a repugnant method of struggle. It's not Lula they wish to condemn: it's the political project that I represent, along with millions of Brazilians. In an attempt to destroy a thought process, they are destroying the foundations of democracy in Brazil.

It is necessary to stress that we, the PT, have always supported the investigation, trial and punishment of those who embezzle money from the people. It is not a rhetorical statement: we fight corruption in practice.

No one worked as hard to create mechanisms of transparency and control of public funds, to strengthen the Federal Police, the Treasury and the Public Prosecutor to pass more effective laws against corruption and organized crime in Congress. This is recognized even by the prosecutors who accuse us.

I have a clear conscience and recognition by the people. I am confident that sooner or later justice and truth will prevail, even if it is in the history books. What worries me, and all democrats, are the continuous violations of the rule of law. It is the shadow of the state of emergency that has been rising over the country.

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