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U.S. Revokes Visas of Brazilian Judges Amid Bolsonaro Legal Battle

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The U.S. State Department has revoked visas for Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes and at least one ally in response to what Secretary of State Marco Rubio described as a “political witch hunt” by Brazil’s judiciary against former President Jair Bolsonaro. The move, announced by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, targets Moraes and at least one judicial ally, signaling U.S. disapproval of the legal actions taken against Bolsonaro by Brazil’s judiciary.

This decision follows a series of aggressive legal maneuvers by Judge Moraes and his court, including search warrants, social media bans, and a restriction on Bolsonaro's contact with foreign officials. Moraes cited the "concrete possibility" of flight risk and accused the former president of appealing to foreign powers, namely the United States, to interfere with Brazilian legal proceedings. Bolsonaro's home was raided, and he was fitted with an electronic ankle monitor, a move many critics see as excessive and politically motivated.

In a Reuters interview from his party headquarters, Bolsonaro, 70, denounced the measures as "cowardice" and labeled Moraes a "dictator." Reflecting on his treatment, the former president stated, "I feel supreme humiliation... I was president of the republic for four years." He denied plans to flee Brazil but acknowledged interest in meeting former U.S. President Donald Trump, if he could retrieve his seized passport.

The legal crackdown on Bolsonaro stems from allegations that he plotted to overturn the results of Brazil's 2022 election, which brought President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva back to power. Bolsonaro and his supporters argue that the court proceedings are politically motivated, designed to suppress dissent and consolidate power under a left-leaning government that is facing growing criticism for authoritarian tendencies and judicial overreach.

In support of his political ally, President Trump has publicly decried the charges as a "political witch hunt" and announced plans to impose a 50% tariff on Brazilian imports beginning August 1. The move, intended to pressure Brazil's judiciary, has drawn international attention and elevated the stakes in an already volatile situation. Bolsonaro reportedly reached out to U.S. diplomats to discuss Trump's tariff threat and its potential impact on U.S.–Brazil relations.

White House spokesperson Anna Kelly reinforced Trump's stance, stating that Bolsonaro and his supporters are under attack from a "weaponized court system."

While Brazil's government defends its judiciary's actions as necessary to uphold democratic order, critics warn the courts are veering toward politically motivated authoritarianism. The revocation of U.S. visas sends a clear message that Washington will not stand idly by while democratic norms are undermined in Latin America's largest democracy.

As Bolsonaro's trial continues before the Supreme Court, the controversy underscores a broader global debate about judicial independence, political retaliation, and foreign policy under shifting ideological tides. For now, U.S. support for Bolsonaro represents a notable pivot in how Washington handles its relationships in the region, and a reaffirmation of principles that value due process and resist judicial overreach.