

U.S. Sanctions Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Over Bolsonaro Trial, Citing Human Rights Concerns

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Tensions between Washington and Brasília escalated this week as the United States imposed sanctions on Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, accusing him of overseeing a politically driven prosecution against former President Jair Bolsonaro. The

move marks a sharp shift in diplomatic tone and brings renewed scrutiny to Brazil's handling of its post-election legal proceedings.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, invoking the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, a law allowing sanctions against foreign officials linked to human rights violations or corruption, announced that de Moraes would face asset freezes and a ban on financial dealings within U.S. jurisdiction. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated that de Moraes is “responsible for an oppressive campaign of censorship, arbitrary detentions that violate human rights, and politicized prosecution, including against former President Jair Bolsonaro,” according to reporting by the Associated Press.

Justice de Moraes currently presides over a criminal case involving Bolsonaro, who is accused of attempting to unlawfully cling to power following his 2022 electoral defeat to left-leaning President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Bolsonaro and his allies have maintained that the charges are politically motivated.

This week's action follows earlier U.S. visa restrictions, announced on July 18, aimed at Brazilian judicial officials involved in what the U.S. now calls a concerning pattern of politically charged prosecutions. The official statement described these developments as posing an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to U.S. national security, foreign policy, and economic interests, a phrase often used to justify significant foreign policy responses.

Eduardo Bolsonaro, a Brazilian federal lawmaker and son of the former president, responded swiftly. Writing on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), he hailed the U.S. sanctions as a “historic milestone,” asserting that “abuses of authority now have global consequences.” Eduardo Bolsonaro, who moved to the U.S. earlier this year, is himself under investigation in Brazil. Authorities allege he worked with American officials to promote sanctions against Brazilian public figures.

The development adds a new dimension to Brazil-U.S. relations, highlighting concerns over judicial independence, freedom of speech, and political neutrality in legal proceedings. Critics of de Moraes argue that his handling of high-profile cases has veered into judicial overreach, while supporters view his actions as necessary for preserving democratic order following Brazil's contested 2022 elections.

As the legal and diplomatic fallout continues, both nations face growing pressure to clarify their positions on human rights, the rule of law, and the appropriate limits of judicial authority

in politically sensitive cases.