

Brazil's Temer Government Implicated in Political Corruption, Another Cabinet Minister Could Resign

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Brazil's current Minister of Education is the latest public official in the Michel Temer administration to be implicated in the country's political corruption scandal.

Brazil's coup imposed Education Minister Mendonca Filho is being investigated for allegedly receiving an illegal bribe of US\$29,000 for the purpose of financing his 2014 re-election campaign, Brazil's General Prosecutor Rodrigo Janot announced Friday, making him the latest official in Temer's administration who could be forced to stand down.

During a Supreme Court hearing Friday, General Prosecutor Janot argued that "evidence of possible bribes for his [Mendonca Filho's] political campaign" would result in the court having jurisdiction to investigate potential criminal practices.



Brazil's interim President Michel Temer and other newly-appointed officials pose for photographers during a meeting at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia. | Photo: Reuters

The allegations stem from records and documents obtained by Brazilian authorities belonging to the former financial director of UTC, Walmir Pinheiro, who last year agreed to a plea bargain testimony.

The owner of UTC, Ricardo Pessoa, was also arrested last November after previously admitting to acts of corruption.

The new evidence made public Friday to the Supreme Court reveals that Education Minister Filho was the recipient of a US\$29,000 donation from the UTC financial group in 2014, according to UTC company bank account records.

Thus far, Filho has denied the allegations, telling authorities that when approached by UTC representatives he refused the money and suggested that the funds be allocated to his political party, the Democrats (DEM).

According to the court documents, the DEM party received two donations of US\$29,000 from UTC in August and September of 2014.

The prosecutors' statement Friday also announced that an investigation may be opened up into the potential involvement of other construction companies such as Odebrecht and Queiroz Galvão, which is alleged to have deposited two "suspicious" sums of US\$29,000 into the bank account of Mendonca Filho's political campaign.

If convicted the Minister of Education would probably be pressured to resign from his current post, making him the fourth public official to resign or quit since the Temer administration came to power earlier this year.

Minister of Education and Culture Mendonca Filho is also implicated in Operation Car Wash, which lies at the core of the country's corruption probes and involves accusations of money laundering and fraud involving the state oil company Petrobras. The newly-merged ministry sees the culture and education ministries joining together for the first time since the officers were separated in 1985 after the fall of the dictatorship.

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