

# **‘Yes, It Was a Coup:’ International Tribunal ‘Rules’ on Brazil’s Democracy**

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*The [International Tribunal for Democracy](#) convened this week in Rio de Janeiro for a mock trial that found that Brazil is in the throes of a coup and the impeachment process against suspended President Dilma Rousseff should be called off.*

The panel of international jurists unanimously found that the removal of Rousseff from office “violates all the principles of the democratic process and Brazilian constitutional order.”

While the ruling does not carry the weight of law, it followed a two-day trial that had all the hallmarks of a legal inquiry, including statements from witnesses and arguments from the prosecution, which were adjudicated by a jury of international experts from Mexico, Argentina, Italy, France, and the United States, among other countries.

The ruling explained that the underlying evidence was the lack of legal basis for the impeachment given that Rousseff had not been determined guilty of a criminal act or violation of the constitution that rises to the level of an impeachable offense.

By not adhering to constitutional and legal requirements for an impeachment process, the jury argued, the impeachment process was a blow to democracy and should be nullified.

U.S.-based human rights lawyer Azadeh Shahshahani, a jury member in the mock tribunal, slammed the United States for not condemning the political crisis in Brazil, according to Brasil de Fato. When prompted by journalists, U.S. spokespeople have repeatedly refused to comment on Brazil beyond expressing faith in the country’s institutions to deal with the situation.

Brazil’s International Tribunal for Democracy, organized by social movements with international support, was modeled off the Russell Tribunal, also known as the International War Crimes Tribunal, that symbolically put U.S. foreign policy and military intervention in Vietnam on trial in the 1960’s.

Rousseff was [suspended from office on May 12](#) in a move that has been widely condemned as an institutional coup aimed at reinstating to political power a corporate elite that has been unable to defeat Rousseff’s Workers’ Party in four consecutive presidential elections dating back to 2003.

Installed “interim” president Michel Temer and his all-white-male cabinet has swiftly moved to unfurl a series of neoliberal policies and cut social programs championed by Rousseff and her Workers’ Party predecessor former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Meanwhile, Temer and his allies have become increasingly embroiled in major corruption scandals of their own, namely the case known as Operation Car Wash dealing with bribery in the Petrobras state oil company. A series of leaked wiretap recordings have also revealed that some of Rousseff's main rivals conspired with the Supreme Court to oust the sitting president and stall the corruption investigations.

The ruling from the International Tribunal for Democracy comes just weeks before the Senate is set to hold a final vote on whether to permanently remove Rousseff from office, and install Temer until the 2018 election. Temer can't run in the next election because he is banned from standing for public office for the next eight years, which would not prevent his installation to the post.

A recent report by the Public Prosecutor's office found that [Rousseff is not guilty of any crime](#). The final vote on her political fate is expected in late August.

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