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Brazil

Temer, we charge you

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV518 - March 2018 -

Publication date: Sunday 25 March 2018

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The president and his party-gang are directly responsible for the economic crisis and the violence that tears the social fabric of Rio de Janeiro and which also allowed the political assassination of Marielle and Anderson.

Dear Mr. (unelected) President of the Republic Michel Lulia Temer,

We charge you with historical and conjunctural guilt in the barbarous execution of the human rights activist, from the black social movement, from the women's social movement, a Rio de Janeiro city councilor Marielle Franco and that of the worker Anderson Pedro Gomes.

The lives of our Mari and our Anderson are not the first, nor will they, unfortunately, be the last lives – young and hardworking – that Your Honored Presidency helps to strike down. Your economic and security policies at the head of the country, in total continuity with the trajectory of Your Excellency as Secretary of Security of the government of São Paulo, has been outstanding in the international field due to its lethal productivity.

As thousands cried, outraged with the death of the two comrades on the night of March 14, murders and slaughters of young people, especially black (or nonwhite) people and workers, this is bitter food in the daily life of the poorest neighborhoods in the big metropolises from the north to south of the country. Just as the commissioned murders from peasants, landless, indigenous and quilombola leaders are trivialized by your side. [1]

The difference is that this is a political assassination, in a big city, of an elected representative.

Marielle was silenced, among many other reasons, because she denounced the policy of a systematic extermination of black and poor youngsters from the favelas, the mass incarcerations, the equally vicious killing of police officers, and the abandonment of the families of the victims of the “two sides”, by you and your caste's contempt for the lives of the most vulnerable. She would use her beautiful and brave mouth to speak through the speakers of the movements and of the City Hall to point out the ones who are responsible, in the midst of this stupid drug war based on the sheer repression of the user and small trafficker, on pointless and badly planned (police) operations and on electoral stunts.

Your guilt in these matters is not news, Your Honor. Your Excellency did not pull the trigger of the sophisticated machine gun for sure. Perhaps by now you are even taking action to find those who had her and Anderson killed. But your party-gang, formerly PMDB, now again MDB, was the one who squandered, through scams of corporate tax benefits and large bribes, Rio's public infrastructure and basic social services to the citizens of the state of Rio de Janeiro. [2] While your Excellency acted as a “decorative” vice president to the PT president (your words, sir, your words), your accomplices here created one of the greatest economic and social crises ever experienced by Rio. Experts predict that it will take the state, maybe, 3 years to start recovering from the damage.

As if this structural background were not enough; it was your party-gang comrades who fertilized, for two and a half terms, the weeds of crime amongst the police and turned a blind eye to the militias installed in the communities. It was they who presented the inefficient Unidade de Polícia Pacificadoras (UPP's) (claiming “we are simply going to retake these territories and then enter with the social initiatives”, who can forget this?) as a panacea for evil that they did not fight and never had any intention or program to fight. [3]

None of this would be quite so appalling if Rio were an island of misery in an ocean of recovery and a sea of prosperity. However, you and the MDB are well aware that this is not what this is all about. Perhaps memories are failing, but you and your party – as can be found in books and university courses – were protagonists of a broad articulation between political, judicial, business, financial and media forces that brought about the very questionable impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, in 2016. The immediate pretext was so called dodgy accounting, but the main issue for your coup bloc, we remember, was “to save the country from one of the greatest economic and social crises ever lived.”

But the answers created by that coup to the crisis has been an enduring nightmare for those at the bottom of the heap, your Excellency. You froze federal investments and wages for 20 years! You’ve been trying hard to destroy an 80-year labor law. You have been cutting social programs to a minimum. You can make environmental disasters even worse, because you do not comply with even the fragile laws we have regarding these issues. You and your banker finance minister strangled the state budgets – most notably that of Rio de Janeiro. To Rio, they practically prescribed suicide: payment of wages in several installments, retirement pensions and other pension benefits, an increase in contributions, increase of rates, end of state universities, the privatisation of the Companhia Estadual de Águas e Esgotos, CEDAE, the state water and sanitation company. And zero, let’s not forget, zero investment.

You, Excellency and your party, MDB are therefore directly responsible for the frightening picture of the economic, social and violence crisis that ravages Rio de Janeiro. It is not coherent that one who wants to run for election (because of course you are not a candidate for re-election) evades responsibility. At this darkest hour, it is for the first representative of the nation to accept the responsibility for the stupid idea of trying to regain a popularity that he never had through the very serious step of ordering federal and military intervention in Rio.

Gee, Mr. President, even with all the reactionary logic, the fundamentalism and the venality of your allied base, you did not manage to get the 308 votes necessary in the National Congress to approve the Retirement Pension Reform, did you? You should confess that, to escape this defeat and in desperation to gain the swing in the polls needed to elect your most faithful collaborators this year – to save them from prison bars thanks to new parliamentary immunities – Your Excellency decided to play with fire. Literally.

Setting yourself up as a mediator might have been too much. Perhaps Your Excellency has crossed the line in the typical politicking of your party-gang, regardless of which country it happens in – as is characteristic of the overwhelming majority of the political representation of Brazilian businesspeople. Your actions will not create a solution to violence in Rio, but the escalation of war between criminal factions, between corrupt and uncontrolled factions of the security forces, now with the increased danger of their proximity to the Armed Forces.

By insisting on the same policy with no way out on the war on drugs, mass incarceration and the extermination of black people, putting the Armed Forces in direct confrontation with the traffickers, you gain applause and are responsible for the worst uncontrolled actions that have arisen since 2013 in this country. The worst of what has arisen in the streets, in politics and in the institutions around Your Excellency.

Your Excellency can go down in history as the one that initiated the Mexicanization of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. Think twice, Mr. President, is this is how you are planning to be elected?

For our part, we will follow the hundreds of thousands who have been taking the streets of Brazil and the world – yes, the world! – rising indignantly against the brutal execution of our companions.

One does not have to be in left-wing to be outraged and come out to the streets. It’s not necessary to be against federal intervention. It is not necessary to have taken to the streets before. In fact, nothing is necessary, except to

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object to the violence and the situation that allowed the tragedy to happen and to demand a thorough investigation.

But we will tell everyone what we know; that Marielle was, in fact, against the 'war on drugs' because she knew that it was this policy that ultimately killed her black and poor brothers and neighbors from Maré and from so many favelas in Rio and Brazil. We will announce that the last article that Marielle wrote was against federal intervention. That Marielle was a Human Rights fighter with capital letters. That Marielle was a black, bisexual and socialist woman. A socialist, indeed and a top quality militant of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL). We are very proud of that. And we're sure she'd like everyone to know.

Marielle and Anderson live! Black lives matter! Down with Pezão, governor of the state of Rio. Down with Temer! Demilitarize the police! End federal intervention now!

[1] quilombolas are settlements created by escaped slaves in Brazil

[2] See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazi...> for information on the twists and turns of the PMDB and MDB

[3] Police Pacification Units, abbreviated UPP, is a so called law enforcement and social services program in the state of Rio de Janeiro, which sets itself the aim of taking back territory supposedly controlled by drug dealers