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Brazil: A Crisis of Democracy, Freedom & Rule of Law?

Testimony:

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the alarming violations of human rights and freedom of expression occurring in Brazil. It is an honor to be here and to share my perspective as a Brazilian journalist who has experienced firsthand the oppressive measures implemented by the current regime.

My name is Paulo Figueiredo, and I am a Brazilian journalist from a well-established family in Brazil. My great-grandfather, General Euclides Figueiredo, led the 1932 revolution against Getúlio Vargas, the bloodiest dictator the country has ever had. Defeated in the revolution, he spent years imprisoned in a dungeon. When the Vargas dictatorship fell, he returned as a constituent deputy in 1946.

His son, my grandfather João Figueiredo, witnessed his father being victimized by a dictatorship. He suffered, being treated as an orphan while his father was incarcerated. Fate had it that, in 1979, Joao Figueiredo became the 30th President of the Republic of Brazil, tasked with ending the Brazilian military regime, which had begun to prevent a communist dictatorship in the country but had already lasted 15 long years . As president, my grandfather decreed amnesty for political prisoners, exiles, and persecuted individuals, held the country's first direct elections in decades, allowed the creation of multiple political parties, and finally, peacefully handed power back to civilians at the end of his constitutional term, fulfilling his promise to fully reestablish democracy in Brazil.

I must confess that I never imagined this legacy of fighting for individual freedoms and against tyranny would span generations and fall upon me as well.

So, allow me to share a bit of my story, as I believe it is relevant to both Brazil and America.

Until December 30, 2022, I was a mainstream media journalist working as a political commentator on JP News, a television network often compared to Fox News in the United States.

Perhaps that's why JP News was the most-watched TV news network during the shows I participated in, including prime time. The most famous of them, the program "Os Pingos nos Is," was voted the best show in the country in two categories: Politics and Opinion. It was also, by far, the audience leader in its time slot, with millions of viewers - more than the sum of the second and third place combined, which included the Brazilian version of the American network CNN.

On social media, my accounts not only had an unparalleled number of followers but also had higher engagement than almost any other journalist in the country. My Twitter profile had around 1.4 million followers. My YouTube channel had approximately 1.1 million subscribers. My Instagram exceeded 800,000 followers. And I had similar numbers on all other platforms, such as Facebook, Telegram, and even TikTok.

Therefore, I am often referred to by the public as "the Brazilian Tucker Carlson," a title I believe I am far from deserving. But, considering my trajectory and reach, it's no exaggeration to say that I am among the most influential journalists in Brazil. Even today, under the intense censorship I face, my show "*Paulo Figueiredo Show*" continues to lead the viewership ratings on the internet, surpassing major networks such as JP News and CNN Brazil and reaching millions of people.

I represent a type of journalism that rarely pleases the traditional press. Unlike many colleagues who camouflage personal opinions as facts, my views are clearly stated. Still, it's disturbing to observe the glee of many traditional media colleagues practicing censorship. The global escalation of censorship wouldn't be possible without a complicit press abandoning its role as democracy's guardian to become an instrument of ideology and partisan politics. While Brazilian media celebrates censoring rivals, American correspondents in Brazil deliberately ignore these absurdities.

Freedom of expression should be defended beyond political divisions. I'm not here to support conservatives, but rather to defend the universal value of freedom of expression, for both supporters and critics of Lula da Silva, Bolsonaro, Moraes, or any public official or public service.

As the framers of the American Constitution taught the world, governments need checks and balances to avoid becoming tyrannical. And the greatest of these is free public debate.

Among the public services that most need scrutiny are electoral systems and their integrity. As the foundation of democracy, these have been the subject of discussions and consequent improvements since their inception. These debates, sometimes heated and painful, are necessary, as America has taught the world so many times. All done under intense but free debates.

The subject of electoral integrity in Brazil is extremely extensive and is not the focus of my testimony. My interest in this topic is tangential only to what matters in the theme of freedom of expression. However, a necessary contextualization is in order.

In Brazil, elections are fully electronic and centralized in one body: the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). This body is responsible for organizing, counting, and supervising all elections in the country. The president of this court, since 2022, is Alexandre de Moraes himself, the same man who is also a justice of the Supreme Federal Court (STF), in charge of all investigations against "Fake News," and, in practice, the dictator of Brazil, as will be demonstrated in this hearing.

In plain terms, in Brazilian elections, the voter types the number of their candidate into an electronic voting machine and prays that their vote is counted correctly by the body commanded by conservative's greatest public enemy. Everything depends on an almost blind trust in the system and in Moraes. However, a significant portion of the population does not share such trust. In December 2022, a PoderData survey showed that 37% of Brazilians did not trust the vote count, including an overwhelming 82% of former President Jair Bolsonaro's voters [1]. Do these people not deserve to have their concerns discussed in the media? Or should they all - tens of millions of people - be silenced by a single man?

The electoral process was also the target of severe criticism from important segments of Brazilian society. Several experts, such as those from the Instituto Voto Legal, an independent NGO composed of the most competent specialists from the best universities in the country, pointed out a series of irregularities and deficiencies in the system [2]. The members of this NGO were subsequently relentlessly persecuted by Alexandre de Moraes, and former President Bolsonaro's party suffered a multi-million dollar fine on November 23, 2022, just for presenting questions.

On November 4, 2022, several technical and statistical inconsistencies were presented in a live stream conducted by Argentine Fernando Cerimedo, in his country. The data originated from Brazil, but the transmission was made from Argentina because, at that time, it would have been censored if carried out on Brazilian territory, with its authors possibly being arrested. Even so, the transmission was quickly taken down from YouTube, by order of Moraes.

I shared Cerimedo's report on my Telegram social network channel, asking knowledgeable people to explain the questions raised during the transmission. In response, shortly afterwards, my Telegram channel was suspended, also by order of Moraes. It was not an isolated case: at that time, a huge number of people who dared to question the Brazilian electoral system had their networks blocked. With the Twitter Files, published by witness Michael Shellenberger, we discovered that the censorship included ordinary citizens and even simple hashtags, with personal data collection by Moraes from everyone who shared these hashtags, whether in Brazil or abroad.

Cerimedo's report was a story more censored than Hunter Biden's laptop, but instead of mere suggestions given by deep state agents, this censorship was carried out through orders issued by the highest judicial authority in the country. While the United States discusses in its Supreme

Court the legality of the actions of public agents in moderating society's discourse, in Brazil it is the Supreme Court itself that unilaterally imposes these decisions.

It was not only NGOs and independent agents who pointed out important problems. The integrity of the electoral process is a sensitive matter of national security. Without the appropriate protections, international powers (hostile or not) can influence the sovereign decision of the people.

Hence, on November 11, 2022, the military experts of the Brazilian Ministry of Defense wrote a report on that year's elections, stating that they had been prevented from verifying the integrity of the Brazilian system and that "it did not exclude the possibility of the existence of fraud or inconsistency in the electronic voting machines." The same body pointed out "important aspects that require clarification," including "possible security risks." The report concludes by urgently asking the president of the TSE, Mr. Alexandre de Moraes, to set up an investigation group. He ignored the request and thanked them for "no evidence of fraud having been found." [3]

It is fair to say that Alexandre de Moraes violently suppressed any questioning of the Brazilian electoral system, despite the abundant reasons for such questioning, or even the impartiality of his work in conducting this process. And I have no fear in stating that, in my opinion, this contempt and the truculence with which the questions were stifled by Moraes strongly contributed to the unbearable feeling of revolt that ended up culminating in the regrettable incidents of January 8th.

I confess that I myself was personally skeptical about the thesis that there could have been electoral fraud in Brazil. My distrust was only fueled precisely by the refusal of the president of the Electoral Court, Mr. Moraes, to respond to legitimate questions - including those from our own Armed Forces - and his willingness to violently censor, repress, and persecute all those who dared to do so. I am not sure whether or not there was fraud in the Brazilian elections, but I want the freedom to discuss this and any other subject.

On December 30, 2022, therefore 2 months after Lula's victorious election, I felt the full force of this repression. I was on vacation with my family in Wisconsin when I received a call from an acquaintance who worked at a social media platform. She warned me that they had received an order from Alexandre de Moraes himself determining that my networks should be blocked for Brazilians within a maximum of two hours, under penalty of severe fines in case of non-compliance. And that all social network platforms had received the same order.

I would disappear for my entire audience. This is the modern equivalent of being sent to a dungeon, as was my great-grandfather.

Later, through a source in the Federal Police, I learned that Moraes' order against me was much broader. He had determined the freezing of all my financial assets - despite the fact that I have not even been a tax resident of Brazil for years -, the breach of my financial transactions confidentiality, an exorbitant fine for every time I said something that displeased him, and even the unthinkable cancellation of my Brazilian passport.

There is no justification, in any ideological spectrum, for measures of this type against journalists in the so-called free world. This is something commonplace in Russia, China, or Cuba. But it is unprecedented in Brazil.

With Lula's inauguration and the January 8th riots, the Federal Public Ministry (the Brazilian equivalent of the Department of Justice) opened a case against JP News (the TV Network I worked for), accusing it of fomenting the revolt - even though commentators like myself had effusively condemned the acts.

For months, I had been warning the population to always keep protests peaceful. On January 8th, I went on air on TV immediately when I learned what was happening. I urged the population to return to their homes and even called the rioters "stupid." To the Washington Post, I classified the riots as a "disaster" and "Moraes' wet dream" [4]. I was deeply aware of what would come next. Unfortunately, I no longer had my social networks. If I had, given my influence, I might have dissuaded the protesters from entering public buildings.

For many months, JP News had been informing commentators that they were prohibited from touching on certain subjects or discussing certain ideas due to censorship orders issued by Moraes. They also had already been demonetized on Youtube by order of Moraes. Faced with the new criminal case and the threat of losing its public concession, they finally laid off all its conservative commentators and began to adopt a more left-leaning editorial stance, like all the other channels. Since then, the audience has plummeted and the channel is currently in severe financial difficulties.

Throughout 2023, I tried to open new accounts on social networks. At least 3 new accounts on Twitter/X and two other accounts on Instagram. All accounts were summarily blocked by new orders from Alexandre de Moraes - which we later came to know when they were released by the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Unemployed, without my social networks and their respective monetizations, responsible for supporting my two 7 and 8 year old American daughters, I then sought to open accounts on U.S. social networks with no presence in Brazil and a strong defense of freedom of expression. That's when I joined Rumble and Locals (a Rumble subsidiary).

I quickly became one of the biggest content creators on both platforms. In April, I was honored with the Rumble Awards for reaching 100,000 subscribers. And, in December 2023, I had around 60,000 subscribers and almost 2,000 paid subscribers on the Locals platform.

Imagine my surprise when, in December 2023, Rumble announced that, due to the absurd orders issued by Moraes against them, they would close access to all Brazilians to the platform. Locals did the same soon after. I understand that I was one of the main targets of these orders. To this day, both platforms remain closed to Brazilians. The financial loss for me has been incalculable and unbearable.

On February 8, 2024, Brazilian newspapers reported a new offensive by Alexandre de Moraes against me. My name was mentioned in a Federal Police operation ordered by him, called

Tempus Veritatis, which investigated an alleged attempt at a coup d'état that was supposedly being planned by former President Jair Bolsonaro. The accusation against me would be the act of accurately reporting the behind-the-scenes of the meetings of the High Command of the Brazilian Army, which in December 2022 were discussing how to deal with the fact that Minister Moraes had ignored the institution's report on the Brazilian electoral system. I stand by my reporting. Apparently, I had committed the serious crime of practicing quality investigative journalism.

According to the Brazilian press, Moraes had, at that moment, issued a new measure against me, prohibiting me from having contact with former President Bolsonaro and any other person investigated in the case (dozens of relevant individuals, including their lawyers). It was a clear intimidation measure that makes a good part of my journalistic activities impossible. As a result, several individuals have refused to grant me interviews for fear of being implicated in this investigation.

It is important to make an alarming caveat that concerns you, gentlemen: all my activity was carried out from the studio I maintain in Florida, where I have resided since 2016. I have, therefore, been under the jurisdiction of this country the entire time and, consequently, protected by the rights guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America.

Why American companies - some without even representation in Brazil - have been obeying orders (many flagrantly illegal) directly from Brazilian judges without following international procedures and sharing data of individuals who are under American jurisdiction is something that I think this Congress should address. Not only does this violate our constitutional rights, but the sharing of data of individuals in the United States exposes an intelligence risk and potentially violates the FCPA (Foreign Corrupt Practices Act).

Unfortunately, my case was not the only one. On the same day that I suffered the first court orders against me, fellow journalists Rodrigo Constantino - who is also exiled here in the United States and present at our hearing - and Guilherme Fiuza, currently silenced in Brazil, were targets of practically identical decisions, with several aspects copied and pasted. Both are bestselling authors and award-winning mainstream media journalists who dared to defy Moraes.

At this point, other journalists, such as Allan dos Santos, were already facing even more draconian measures, which included an order for his arrest. Allan, who is also here at the hearing, previously owned the largest independent channel in Latin America, had his outlet closed by order of Moraes. He came to the United States and then had his arrest ordered by Moraes in October 2021, who asked for his name to be placed on Interpol's red notice list. The dictator also requested the American government to extradite the journalist, but obviously the request was denied by the US, since there is no provision for deportation for crimes of opinion.

Another iconic example is that of podcaster Bruno Ayub, popularly known as Monark. Some call him the Brazilian Joe Rogan, as he is the founder of the most popular podcast in Brazil. Not by

a long shot can Monark be called a conservative, but due to his critical positions towards Moraes, he also suffered a fate similar to mine and other colleagues. He is also exiled in Florida.

These are just a few examples. In fact, I could fill all the Congressional Records reporting cases such as that of the group of comedians from Hipócritas, who satirized Moraes and had members arrested and their channel shut down; or Judge Ludmila Lins Grilo, also present here in the audience and under political asylum, who criticized the Brazilian judiciary and was persecuted; or that of congressmen like Carla Zambelli, who cannot be with us because her passport was taken by Moraes; Or of congressmen such as Nikolas Ferreira, Gustavo Gayer, and Marcel Van Hatten, all present here, who had their social networks blocked by Moraes in the middle of an election year. In fact, there is, at this moment, a Senator of the Republic, Marcos do Val, who has all his social media blocked for having faced Moraes.

Others, like Congressman Daniel Silveira, had an even worse fate. He is now in prison, sentenced to 9 years for harshly criticizing Alexandre de Moraes in a video. He was even pardoned by President Bolsonaro, but the pardon was annulled by the Federal Supreme Court itself.

According to a February 2024 survey by the Politicians Ranking, the overwhelming majority of Brazilian members of Congress express the opinion that the Supreme Court regularly or occasionally invades the powers of the National Congress. In the Chamber of Deputies, the sum of the percentages reaches 76.5%, while in the Senate this number is 71.4%.

And countless ordinary citizens - hundreds or thousands - have their voices silenced by the will of a single man. Others, in all spheres of society, including the press, the military and parliament, self-censor out of fear.

A survey conducted by AtlasIntel on February 9, 2024 [5], shows that 64% of respondents believe that Brazil "lives under a dictatorship" of the Judiciary or that many judges "commit abuses and exceed their attributions." Most of the recent demonstrations with hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of Brazil are against Moraes.

Therefore, both the Brazilian people and their Congress know that our judiciary is out of control. They do not act because they are, as I said, paralyzed with fear. No wonder.

Many ask: but how can one justice do all these things? Doesn't Brazil have laws defending freedom of expression? Yes, it does. And Alexandre de Moraes does not actually have this power by law. No one has this power in Brazil. In fact, his actions flagrantly violate the Brazilian Constitution and the international laws to which Brazil is a signatory.

I am including in my written testimony the excerpts from the Brazilian Constitution, the Pact of San José of Costa Rica, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that attest to what I am stating here.

Brazilian Constitution (1988):

Article 5, item IV: "The expression of thought is free, anonymity being forbidden."

Article 5, item IX: "The expression of intellectual, artistic, scientific, and communications activities is free, independently of censorship or license."

Article 220: "The expression of thought, creation, speech and information, in any form, process or medium shall not be subject to any restriction, observing the provisions of this Constitution."

Pact of San José of Costa Rica (American Convention on Human Rights):

Article 13:

Paragraph 1: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. This right includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art, or through any other medium of one's choice."

Paragraph 2: "The exercise of the right provided for in the foregoing paragraph shall not be subject to prior censorship but shall be subject to subsequent imposition of liability, which shall be expressly established by law to the extent necessary to ensure: a) respect for the rights or reputations of others; or b) the protection of national security, public order, or public health or morals."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Virtually all these censorship and persecution actions occur within the scope of flagrantly illegal processes (such as the famous "Fake News Probe," which now is investigating even Elon Musk!), where Moraes acts as the alleged victim (he claims that criticisms of him are "attacks on democratic institutions"), investigator (since he created his own detachment of the Federal Police and administrative investigative bodies in the TSE), prosecutor (since the Public Prosecutor's Office refused to participate in this farce and harshly criticized him), and judge (without the right to appeal, since he is the highest instance).

When he does not act through his position in the Supreme Court, Moraes acts through his seat in the TSE, which assumed exceptional powers during the 2022 elections. These powers should have lasted only during the electoral period as a way to "protect democracy," but as we have never seen a tyrant voluntarily abdicate any power, they obviously persist and have been expanded to this day.

It is important to say that all these acts occur in a much more veiled way than one might imagine. The entire process runs under legal secrecy. All orders are issued with an obligation of secrecy. The lawyers of virtually all those investigated complain that they do not have full access to the case files. Testimonies are scheduled without people knowing under what conditions they are being heard.

My case is also iconic in this sense. I have been suffering the penalties I described here for about a year and a half, but to this day, I have not been formally notified or informed of any decision or procedure against me and, therefore, I am unable to defend myself. Such notification should occur through a rogatory letter, but the Brazilian government does not seem to have any interest in notifying me, since the penalties are already underway.

In fact, the first time I had access to the decisions issued against me was when the Judiciary Committee of this House decided to subpoena the social network X, requesting all of Moraes' decisions, and then decided to make them public. This was the first time that the Brazilian people could see such decisions and their content (which generally contain a page without any kind of legal basis or even mention of the content that violated the laws and which laws they violated) shocked the country. If it weren't for Elon Musk and the US Congress, Moraes would still be acting in the shadows.

Part of all this secrecy occurs because there is no law in Brazil that prohibits the dissemination of "fake news". Moraes knows this, which is why he has openly lobbied for Congress to approve an Internet Regulation Bill that he himself sent to the House, however atypical it may seem for a Justice to send a bill to Congress. Congress, however, has not yet reached a consensus for this approval. This does not prevent Moraes from acting outside the law. He invokes existing laws on "incitement to crime" and "violent abolition of the rule of law," in which clearly none of the conduct reported here fits, but he does so anyway. And there is no one to appeal to in Brazil, since he is the highest instance.

For these reasons, Moraes faces numerous actions in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Regrettably, the OAS has been ignoring the cases. The recent report by their Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, almost solely funded by the United States, fails to mention any violations in Brazil. It is crucial for Congress to reevaluate its financial support to this body, which, primarily funded by American taxpayers, has consistently neglected its mission amidst human rights violations in Latin America and has enabled Moraes' dictatorship.

Unfortunately, the role of the United States in this sad story might be broader. Some could even say that the US government and NGOs acted directly in strengthening Brazil's censorship apparatus.

According to a report by investigative journalist David Agape published on January 21, 2024, the United States government might have played a significant role in assisting the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE) in developing strategies to "combat disinformation" and strengthen censorship practices in the country [6]. FBI agents and officials from the US Department of Justice actively participated in meetings of the TSE's specialized council, sharing

their experiences and knowledge on how to deal with "fake news" and "protect the integrity of elections." Agents from the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (ABIN) and members of the Brazilian Armed Forces' intelligence also participated. The meetings were expected to remain confidential until after the 2022 elections but were opened after protests from Brazilian society and are now public records.

In fact, this entire modus operandi sounds extremely familiar to you as it mirrors the very same tactics outlined in the report "*The Censorship-Industrial Complex: How Top Biden White House Officials Coerced Big Tech to Censor Americans, True Information, and Critics of the Biden Administration*" released last week by the Committee on the Judiciary [7]. The same committee published very similar findings about Brazil just a couple of weeks ago. [8] However, while according to the report the Biden administration acted informally, persuading and coercing technology companies, Moraes operated through judicial orders issued by Brazil's highest court. If the big tech dared to challenge it, they faced threats of fines or even being disconnected from Brazil entirely, as indeed happened to Telegram in March 2022.

The contribution to censorship in Brazil also comes from other American NGOs [9]. For example, the activist group Sleeping Giants Brazil (SGBR), which pressures advertisers to boycott media outlets that give voice to right-wing figures, received support from international NGOs, including George Soros' Open Society. The Brazilian NGO Nossas, which provided infrastructure for SGBR, is funded by the Open Society, Ford Foundation, OAK Foundation, among others. Nossas also receives funds from the Climate and Society Institute (ICS), an NGO that reallocates funds from the Open Society and other foundations to Brazilian organizations. Moraes frequently followed recommendations made by SGBR and adopted measures to widely censor opponents of then-candidate Lula da Silva.

In another case, the Atlantic Council, through its Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), also played another role in promoting censorship in Brazil working closely with Moraes. The DFRLab produced an influential report using data from Meta that pointed to "inauthentic and coordinated" activities on social media accounts linked to then-President Jair Bolsonaro's inner circle. This report was instrumental in Moraes' infamous "Fake New Probe".

But perhaps the most frightening influence was the systematic campaign that used all the soft power of American foreign policy in a "discreet campaign to defend Brazilian elections", according to an article published on June 1st 2023 by the Financial Times [10]. Another fair way to read the story is that the US government covertly used its power to strengthen Moraes, using high-ranking officials from the Biden administration, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the head of the US Southern Command, General Laura Richardson, and CIA Director William Burns, to threaten public officials, military officers, and Brazilian politicians with sanctions or worse ensuring that Moraes wasn't challenged.

Why the United States government, which was once the great promoter of freedom and democracy in the world, would use its top officials to foment censorship and, with that, ensure the rise to power of a president who is pro-China, pro-Russia, pro-Hamas, pro-Cuba, pro-Venezuela, pro-drug cartels, and who opposes American interests on virtually every

continent, even seeking to undermine the dollar as a global currency, is something that escapes my understanding.

This unholy alliance remains ongoing. CIA Director William Burns recently visited Brazil to meet with officials from the Lula da Silva government [11]. At the center of the publicized discussion agenda was "combating disinformation," which at this point many see as a mere code word for censoring opponents.

Last week, on May 2, a delegation of Brazilian congressmen who support the Lula-Moraes regime was in Washington for a meeting with radical Democratic Party members of the House and Senate and OAS members. Among the members of the Brazilian delegation was an important congresswoman, an open member of the Communist Party of Brazil. The meetings were scheduled and funded by a Brazilian NGO, the Wladmyr Herzog Foundation, a partner of an American NGO, the Washington Brazil Office. Neither institution is registered under FARA, to the best of my knowledge [12].

We know the difficulties we faced in order for this simple hearing to take place. Why? Why so much resistance in allowing us to tell our story?

If the use of lawfare to influence elections, if the corruption of the judicial system to undermine democratic institutions, if the use of the apparatus of unelected bureaucrats to stifle voices and sacrifice individual freedoms... if all of this sounds "too close to home," then it is good for this important House to start worrying about these experiments that today seem to be just reports from a distant Banana Republic, but are approaching America at a frightening speed. The parallels between what is happening in Brazil and the growing threats to democracy in the United States are alarming and cannot be ignored. It is imperative that Congress be vigilant and take concrete measures to protect the fundamental pillars of our society, before it is too late. The gradual erosion of freedoms and the concentration of power in the hands of a few are warning signs that must be taken seriously, as the fate of our nation is at stake.

In Brazil, ultimately, it will be up to the Brazilian people to solve their own problems. But it is important that the United States of America once again become a force for freedom and no longer for censorship.

The United States Congress has enormous powers in this direction, and I urge that you use them.

The first of these powers is to ensure that the Moraes-Lula regime stops operating in the shadows once and for all. Brazil needs to be the subject of more frequent hearings, and the U.S. Congress must continue to use its powers to bring light to the facts that have occurred in Brazil, as the Judiciary Committee has also done. Visit Brazil. I speak on behalf of the congressmen here that you are welcome in our parliament, and your mere presence in the country will bring greater visibility to what has been happening.

As the Bible says in John 8:32, "*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*"

Second, the U.S. Congress must exercise its oversight power against current Executive Branch policies that harm not only freedoms in Brazil, but also U.S. global interests, pushing my country into the lap of nations hostile to America, such as China.

Third, the U.S. Congress has the power to withhold funds and resources, not only those destined for Brazil, but also those destined for international organizations such as the OAS that are shirking their roles. The American taxpayer should not finance the oppression of my people.

And finally, Congress has the power to produce legislation imposing harsh sanctions on the Brazilian government and Brazilian public officials who violate fundamental rights and freedoms.

With this help, I guarantee that my country's institutions will react and return our freedoms. Give us the tools and we'll finish the job.

This is what I beg of you, on behalf of millions of Brazilians.

God bless America. God bless Brazil.

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