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RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

NATIONAL SECURITY

ECONOMIC AND CONSUMER POLICY

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our deep concern over President Jair Bolsonaro's pursuit of policies in Brazil that threaten democratic rule, human rights, public health, and the environment in the largest country in South America and the sixth-most populous nation in the world. We believe that it is critically important that cooperation between the U.S. and Brazil is based on a shared commitment to respect democratic values and human rights, and to take action to address the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. We urge you to send a clear message to the Bolsonaro Administration that if President Bolsonaro's attacks on the Brazilian election process continue, then U.S.-Brazil relations will be severely compromised.

Bolsonaro's tenure has been marked by anti-democratic policies from the outset. He is among the leading examples of the global trend toward illiberal and authoritarian politics. His campaign was marked by hateful insults hurled against Afro-Brazilians, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA+ people, labor unions, and praise for the brutal military dictatorship that ruled in Brazil from 1964 to 1985ⁱ. Once in power, Bolsonaro proceeded to enact a wide range of policies that have endangered vulnerable minority groups, created historically high unemployment rates, harmed the environment, threatened Brazil's relatively young democracy, and led to the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands from Covid-19.

Bolsonaro has stated that he will not accept the next election results under the current Brazilian voting systemⁱⁱ. We find this particularly troubling because Bolsonaro has brought more military officials into his administration than any other president since Brazil's democracy was reestablished in 1988, creating conflicts between governmental institutions and the armed forces. Bolsonaro backed Trump's false claims of election fraud and was one of the last global leaders to recognize your electoral victory, facts that also cast doubt on his willingness to accept the results of Brazil's 2022 electionⁱⁱⁱ. His son — a prominent Brazilian Congressman — personally attended "Stop the Steal" activities on January 6 in Washington, which prompted Senator Bob Menendez to issue a letter demanding that Bolsonaro condemn the attacks on our democracy^{iv}.

We are also deeply troubled by Bolsonaro's hardline, militarized approach to law enforcement, which has resulted in massive human rights violations, as illustrated by the Jacarezinho operation last May — the deadliest police raid in Rio de Janeiro's history — which resulted in the death of 28 people. Alarming, the number of killings by police in Brazil in 2019 reached its highest level since 2013 with more than 6,000 killings of mostly poor and black people^v. These police killings are largely a result of the excessive use of force encouraged by Bolsonaro^{vi}.

Bolsonaro has also gravely endangered the bio-diverse Amazon rainforest by dismantling environmental agencies and weakening enforcement mechanisms. These actions have led to an increase in violations of Indigenous peoples' rights and enabled the invasion of constitutionally protected territories by illegal loggers, miners and ranchers. Bolsonaro has militarized parts of the Amazon region, substituting environmental specialists with untrained military officials who have failed to prevent illegal deforestation,

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mining and land grabs. Following an 80 percent decrease in deforestation from 2004-2012, Bolsonaro has unapologetically overseen record-high deforestation rates since taking office in 2019^{vii}. Given these facts, the U.S. government should reject any environmental deal with Bolsonaro that is not conditioned on tangible results, as 15 U.S. senators, celebrities, and over 200 organizations recently urged^{viii}.

Another area of concern is Bolsonaro's refusal to implement critical policies recommended by experts to address the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead of adopting recommended preventive measures, the Brazilian government bought millions of excess doses of hydroxychloroquine that were produced after former President Trump misleadingly touted its benefits and despite studies confirming a higher percentage of deaths associated with the medicine^{ix}. Largely as a result of these irresponsible policies, more than 600,000 Brazilians have died from Covid-19, the second highest rate of Covid deaths in the world. Bolsonaro's policies threaten the world by enabling the spread of new and more dangerous variants of the virus, and he is now under investigation in the Brazilian Congress over Covid-19 vaccine deals.

Bolsonaro's deplorable record in office calls for an urgent review of U.S.-Brazil relations with a focus on identifying potential adjustments to the relationship that could provide leverage to incentivize less harmful behavior. This review should include bilateral cooperation on counter-narcotics and counterterrorism, and most notably, the offer made to Brazil to become a NATO global partner. In 2019, Brazil was designated a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), and Bolsonaro used this designation for his political benefit, citing it as a major accomplishment and a stamp of approval from the U.S. government^x. Offering the government of Brazil the opportunity to become a NATO partner would signal that the U.S. has no serious issue with the human rights, democratic, and environmental violations taking place in Brazil. Therefore, we respectfully call on you to at a minimum return U.S.-Brazil relations to the pre-Trump status quo, at least until a new leader, more aligned with democratic and human rights values, is elected in Brazil. This should include cancelling the MNNA designation, withdrawing the offer made to Brazil to become a NATO partner, and other forms of harmful cooperation established during the Trump-Bolsonaro period.

Troubling actions by the previous U.S. administration towards Brazil should also be reviewed, including the Trump Administration directly lobbying Brazil to reject desperately needed vaccines for geopolitical reasons and the potential role of the U.S. Department of Justice in advising the investigation that led to the unjust disqualification of Bolsonaro's primary electoral opponent — a decision that was recently overturned by Brazil's highest court because of alleged political bias^{xi}.

The recent retirement of former ambassador to Brazil, Todd Chapman, represents an important opportunity to put our relationship with Brazil back on the right track. Ambassador Chapman maintained a problematic personal friendship with Bolsonaro and refused to publicly encourage Bolsonaro to protect the environment, human rights, and democracy in his nation^{xii}. Filling this vacancy with an ambassador that will remain politically neutral while firmly standing up for fundamental U.S. values and interests would represent an important step forward.

We appreciated the actions taken by the Obama-Biden administration in support of human rights in Brazil, including your personal support to the country's Truth Commission that you demonstrated by hand delivering classified documents related to Brazil's military dictatorship to then President Dilma Rousseff^{xiii}. It is important to note that Rousseff's removal from office was marked by misogynistic narratives in which Jair Bolsonaro, then a congressman, honored Dilma's torturer — identified by the Truth Commission as one of the worst human rights abusers during the dictatorship — while voting for her impeachment.

Thank you kindly for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Rashida Tlaib
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Karen Bass
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Eleanor Holmes Norton
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

David N. Cicilline
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Alan Lowenthal
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Ilhan Omar
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Ayanna Pressley
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Mark Pocan
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Susan Wild
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jim Costa
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Maxine Waters
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Adriano Espaillat
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Raúl M. Grijalva
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jan Schakowsky
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Cori Bush
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Zoe Lofgren
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Sylvia R. Garcia
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Juan Vargas

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Donald M. Payne, Jr.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Tony Cárdenas

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Pramilla Jayapal

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Mondaire Jones

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Brenda L. Lawrence

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jamaal Bowman

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Ro Khanna

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Veronica Escobar

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

James P. McGovern

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Steve Cohen

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Yvette D. Clarke

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Daniel T. Kildee

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

David Trone

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Joaquin Castro

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/s/

Anna G. Eshoo

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Andy Levin

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Nydia M. Velazquez

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Rosa L. DeLauro

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Katherine M. Clark

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Peter Welch

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jimmy Gomez

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Linda T. Sánchez

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Frank Pallone, Jr.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Jerrold Nadler

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Danny K. Davis

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jared Huffman

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Jamie Raskin

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Earl Blumenauer

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Grace F. Napolitano

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Suzanne Bonamici

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Bobby L. Rush

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Bonnie Watson Coleman

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Lucille Roybal-Allard

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Peter A. DeFazio

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

Dwight Evans

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

/s/

James R. Langevin

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

ⁱ <https://theintercept.com/2018/10/28/jair-bolsonaro-elected-president-brazil/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/brazils-bolsonaro-says-may-not-accept-2022-election-under-current-voting-system-2021-07-07/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-brazil/brazils-bolsonaro-reaffirms-trump-ties-cites-baseless-vote-fraud-claims-idUSKBN29C01X>

^{iv} <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/internacional/senador-dos-eua-cobra-que-araujo-e-bolsonaro-condenem-ataque-ao-capitolio/>

^v Fórum Brasileiro De Segurança Pública, 2020, p. 87, *Anuário Brasileiro De Segurança Pública 2020*.

^{vi} <https://time.com/6047032/jair-bolsonaro-crime-policies-brazils-favelas/>

^{vii} www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-55130304

^{viii} <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Letter%20to%20Biden%20re%20Amazon%204-15-21.pdf>;
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-56816180>;
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-56816180>

^{ix} <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-brazil-idUSKBN2370RU>

^x <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/politica/noticia/2019-08/bolsonaro-hails-us-move-designate-brazil-non-nato-ally>

^{xi} <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/opinion/international-world/car-wash-operation-brazil-bolsonaro.html>

^{xii} <https://amazonwatch.org/assets/files/2021-03-29-congressional-letter-to-amb-chapman-re-munduruku.pdf>

^{xiii} <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/declassified-documents-given-biden-to-rousseff-detail-secret-dictatorship-era-executions>