
GLOBAL CRISIS IN MEMORY

Bolsonaro in Power: Failed Memory Politics in Post-Authoritarian Brazil?

Nina Schneider

University of Duisburg-Essen, DE

nina.schneider@uni-due.de

This brief chapter offers some first reflections on the nexus between what is now being construed as a 'failed' memory politics in Brazil and the recent mass support for a figure who enthuses about human rights violations. It asks: Where did memory politics 'fail' and to what extent can this explain Bolsonaro's rise? Is the Bolsonaro government successfully dismantling a supposed 'post-authoritarian human rights culture' or 'collective memory', and what kind of resistance does he face? The chapter answers these questions in three steps. It first outlines Bolsonaro's views on past violence. It then summarises key post-1985 memory initiatives in order to, thirdly, examine both how the Bolsonaro government is trying to dismantle existing human rights and memory institutions, and who the actors are that resist these political initiatives.

On 29 October 2018, 55.1 per cent of Brazilian voters elected the far-right candidate Jair Messias Bolsonaro as the next Brazilian president.¹ Bolsonaro – a former army officer, a Roman Catholic with strong ties to the evangelical Protestant Church and a long-time member of parliament – has openly justified torture and murder and praised human rights violators active during the military regime in Brazil (1964–85). While analysts have offered a variety of different explanations for his presidential victory, the phenomenon also suggests that his voters have never truly engaged with the history of the post-1964 dictatorship, a regime that systematically tortured several thousand citizens and killed or disappeared hundreds more (see, e.g., CNV).

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¹ This article was submitted in April 2019. Since this date Bolsonaro's popularity has declined, particularly as a result of his perceived mismanagement of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Brazil in early 2020.

I argue that, while the reasons for Bolsonaro's rise are complex, his initial popularity showed that few Brazilian voters have truly engaged with the history of the Brazilian dictatorship.² While the comparatively weak measures implemented by key protagonists of the Brazilian state could not in and of themselves prevent such a political backlash, it is, on the other hand, precisely the public and private memory and human rights institutions, networks and entrepreneurs who are now resisting this shift by opposing the Bolsonaro government and his radical supporters. These human rights and memory actors seem, however, to be increasingly subject to intimidation and even violence themselves.

Bolsonaro's views on past violence

In 1993, Bolsonaro openly declared that he favoured dictatorship, and in 2016, he stated in a radio interview: 'The dictatorship's mistake was to torture but not kill' (quoted in Forest). On another occasion, he publicly claimed that only civil war would bring about change and that even former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (president 1995–2003; FHC) should have been killed: 'Unfortunately, you'll only change things by having a civil war and doing the work the military regime didn't do. Killing 30,000, starting with FHC. Killing. If a few innocent people die, that's alright' (quoted in Brum). Furthermore, he declared, 'I'm pro-torture, and the people are too' (quoted in Brum).

On 17 April 2016, when the members of the Brazilian lower house (*Câmara*) cast their votes on whether to proceed with the 'impeachment' process and remove President Dilma Rousseff from office, Bolsonaro voted yes and dedicated his vote to Colonel Carlos A. B. Ustra, a sadistic and unrepentant mass torturer under the military regime (Brágon). This dedication was particularly nefarious, because Rousseff had been tortured by Ustra as a nineteen-year-old guerrilla fighter opposing the regime. Yet, the statement went unpunished. The so-called Ethics Council of the Brazilian lower house cleared Bolsonaro of the charge of endorsing the crime of torture by a vote of eleven to one (Brágon). During the election campaign, his sons even wore t-shirts with the image of the torturer Ustra and the slogan 'Ustra lives' (Brum).

Bolsonaro has often celebrated the violence of other right-wing dictators. On television, he once declared that Pinochet should have killed more Chileans. He has also praised the infamous Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner, who hid the Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele, and the Peruvian despot Alberto Fujimori (Filho). In 2003, he even praised death squads that had just massacred dozens of black inhabitants in the outskirts in Bahia (Filho). Despite his consistent endorsement of violence, Bolsonaro's election campaign counted on the support of the most conservative power players in society, including agribusiness, the evangelical churches, pro-gun lobbyists and most Brazilian businesspeople.

Bolsonaro has rarely commented on earlier justice and memory initiatives in a direct and reasoned manner, as if there is no need for him to justify his stance. He tends rather to react in a polemical and confrontational manner by obstructing human rights events or by launching direct counter-propaganda. As a congressman, he opposed the Brazilian National Truth Commission. On 10 December 2014, when the Commission presented its final report to Brazilian Congress members in the capital, Brasília, I personally witnessed how he constantly interrupted the panellists. Rather than criticizing memory initiatives in a reasoned fashion, he lavished praise on torturers like Ustra or dismissed human rights and memory entrepreneurs as 'communists' or 'terrorists'.

² The reasons include the fact that powerful lobby groups benefit from his presidency and that Brazilian voters for their part tend to fluctuate where their electoral choices are concerned; many are disillusioned with the Workers' Party and alarmed at the grave and persisting economic and political crisis their country now faces.

Brief characterization of the main post-1985 memory initiatives

For decades, Brazil was the only post-authoritarian country in South America that had neither established a truth commission nor tried state criminals for their actions during the authoritarian period, let alone reformed the military, police or judiciary (Schneider, "Breaking the 'Silence' of the Military Regime"). In Argentina and Chile, truth commissions were created directly after the transition to democracy. In contrast to Brazil, former human rights violators were prosecuted. While in Argentina and Uruguay amnesty laws were annulled, in Chile the amnesty was never formally revoked, yet international human rights law outranks Chilean national legislation (Schneider, "Impunity in Post-Authoritarian Brazil"). In Brazil, domestic demands to work through the violent past mostly came from the families of victims and human rights activists who had been campaigning for truth and accountability measures since the late 1970s (Santos et al.). In late 2010, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) condemned the Brazilian state for crimes against humanity committed in the Araguaia region during the dictatorship, obliging Brazil to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. Despite such external pressure, however, it is still the case that no former human rights violator in Brazil has been criminally prosecuted. Indeed, Bolsonaro and his supporters are now even prepared to go a step further by publicly praising torturers and assassins.

Overall, the key official 'memory and justice' initiatives in Brazil have been reparation payments, and most recently, the National Truth Commission (2012–14) (CNV; Schneider, *The Brazilian National Truth Commission*). In 1995, then Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was the first to officially acknowledge the murder and disappearance of dozens of regime opponents, going so far as to offer reparations to victims' families and establishing a Special Commission for the Dead and Disappeared (CEMDP). Since 2002 the Amnesty Commission, the Brazilian organization responsible for administering reparation payments to a larger group of the politically oppressed (for example, tortured, imprisoned and dismissed citizens) has been deciding upon individual cases of compensation and has collected substantial evidence of human rights violations committed during the dictatorship (Abrão and Torelly). The first official report on state-sponsored violence was only published in 2007 (SEDH) and largely drew upon investigations conducted by the families of victims.

Between 2012 and 2014, the National Truth Commission produced a 3,383-page and three-volume final report, along with a well-documented webpage and archival material (now in the Brazilian National Archives). The final report (CNV) includes a case-by-case study of 434 instances of deaths and disappearances, lists the names of 377 perpetrators (in both cases, these are conservative estimates) and, importantly, contains twenty-nine recommendations. The first recommendation stipulates that the armed forces acknowledge their responsibility for the gross human rights violations between 1964 and 1985, and the second posits the suspension of the blanket amnesty for crimes against humanity (CNV 964–5). Further suggestions include the implementation of reforms in the armed forces, law enforcement and the criminal justice system; military education; and the separation of military and state police (recommendations 5, 6, 20; CNV 967, 971). None of these recommendations has been enacted though. Most scholars and human rights activists have criticized the ongoing impunity for former torturers as the Brazilian state's greatest failure. They have further argued that a clear transition to democracy is wanting, whereby the human rights of citizens are truly guaranteed (Santos et al.; Abrão and Torelly; CNV; Schneider, *The Brazilian National Truth Commission*). To the contrary, as we shall see, the Bolsonaro government is now directly opposing the National Truth Commission's recommendations: the armed forces are invited to celebrate the military regime rather than apologize for the crimes committed; reforms of the military, police and judicial system are not progressing; and instead of halting impunity, measures are underway to secure impunity for new human rights violations.

The journalist Eliane Brum argues that Bolsonaro is ‘the monstrous product of Brazilian democracy’s silence about the crimes committed by its former dictatorship’ (Brum). The question indeed arises as to whether Bolsonaro would ever have been elected, had the state enforced the commission’s recommendations, organized a sustained clarification programme about the regime’s violence, both in schools and for the wider public, and had deniers or even those who applaud violence – such as the new president and his sons – faced disciplinary measures. Yet, even if we grant that key segments of the state have failed to seriously rework the military past, the question remains as to why so many Brazilians have continued to be divided about the military regime.

In the Brazilian case, as Bolsonaro’s rise confirms, there is no widespread societal rejection of the military dictatorship. As I have argued elsewhere, and although other historians disagree (Schneider, “Breaking the ‘Silence’ of the Military Regime” 7–9), Brazilian society’s view of the dictatorship has been so heterogeneous that it can best be described as an ‘unmastered past’ (Rosenfeld 126–7), a historical legacy that does not have a settled status within ‘collective memory’. Thus, it would be too easy to claim – as many memory entrepreneurs and even United Nations personnel do – that Bolsonaro is currently destroying a Brazilian ‘collective memory’, understood as a dominant memory, as if, prior to his seizure of power, most Brazilians would have condemned the dictatorship outright.³ A key feature in Brazil has been silence and polarization, and numerous Brazilians still view the military era in a positive or at least indifferent way.

Scholars have searched for explanations for Brazilian society’s apparent reluctance to condemn a violent regime. Overall, the failure to prosecute perpetrators and the lack of a concerted public rejection of past violence form part of a broader and long-established culture of impunity, partly rooted in centuries of colonialism and slavery. For complex reasons, Brazil has a long history of amnesties (Schneider, *Amnestied in Brazil, 1895–1985*). Another explanation is the incomplete transition to democracy, including the state’s failure, as noted above, to act, whether by punishing perpetrators or by reforming the police, military and justice sectors. The majority of civilian staff in the authoritarian judiciary remained in post after Brazil’s return to democracy, unlike in Chile and Argentina where the judiciary was reformed and purged (Pereira). Another explanation involves the state’s failure to integrate the topic into school curricula (in a critical manner) or public clarification campaigns (Schneider, *Brazilian Propaganda* xvii). Brazilian citizens, especially young persons, have had comparatively little opportunity to study the dictatorship in greater depth, leaving the myths about it untouched.

Besides the state’s failure to systematically address the dictatorship from above, it also seems that such local memory initiatives as were available did not get taken up by large parts of the population. Public consensus has not yet materialized in opinion polls in which a clear majority condemns the regime, or in museums, which are not only officially patronised but also endorsed by the public in their present form (Schneider, “Breaking the ‘Silence’ of the Military Regime”). The military regime framed the 1979 amnesty law as a ‘reciprocal amnesty’ (Reis 47), which benefited both ‘torturers’ and ‘survivors’ alike. Despite efforts from the families of victims and the Amnesty and Truth Commissions, this image has never been systematically dismantled – neither from above nor from below. It has even been endorsed by artists and left-wing politicians (Schneider and Atencio). In sum, while the reasons for the lack of a clear condemnation of the military regime are complex, explanations include omissions from above, lack of interest from below and a wider culture of impunity in the history of Brazil.

³ Methodologically, it is difficult to grasp the precise meaning of ‘collective’ or ‘dominant memory’; loosely conceived, though, we may say that it is when the majority of a nation would agree to narrate a part of its history in much the same way (see Schneider, “Breaking the ‘Silence’ of the Military Regime”).

The left-wing governments have themselves not seriously engaged with a sustained memory and human rights agenda either. Despite Lula's historic popularity and short-term economic boom, his Worker's Party governments failed to prosecute perpetrators, despite the rulings of the IACHR in late 2010. Forty-nine per cent of the ministers in Lula's two governments were former underground guerrilla fighters or student leaders who had opposed the regime (Araújo). Likewise, the government of Dilma Rousseff (2014–16) sustained the politics of impunity when failing to address the recommendations of the Brazilian National Truth Commission. While the exact reasons for this omission remain a matter for speculation, it may well be that left-wing governments shied away from a confrontation with the armed forces, and felt that society at large might question such a step (Schneider, "Impunity in Post-Authoritarian Brazil").

Even if Bolsonaro and his supporters can count on significant societal approval of the dictatorship and have hijacked or instrumentalized the 'politics of memory', some years ago he was still a pariah. While this shift may partly be explained by domestic factors, it also needs to be placed in a specific transnational context. Concerning Latin America, Bolsonaro supports a right-wing turn. Yet, in contrast to Mauricio Macri of Argentina and Sebastián Piñera of Chile, who came to power advocating the merits of small government and open markets, Bolsonaro is a much more radical right-wing leader (Encarnación). Given the rise of new populist memory across the world, Bolsonaro is far from being alone, though, his specific role model being Donald Trump. In his propaganda campaign, Bolsonaro called himself the 'Trump of the tropics'. This phrase would soon be uncritically copied by the international media, including quality outlets like the BBC and the *Guardian*; unfortunately so, because Bolsonaro is much more aggressive than Trump, in my view. Bolsonaro's first foreign trip took him to the United States, where he expressed his admiration for Trump at a joint press conference (Watson). Nationalistic right-wing leaders from across the world congratulated the president-elect, including Italy's extreme-right interior minister Matteo Salvini, French right-wing leader Marine Le Pen and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who also personally attended his inauguration in January 2019 (Watts). Many regions of the world do at present face a deliberately instigated polarization of society and the rise of right-wing populism, nationalism and xenophobia.

Bolsonaro's attack on memory politics would seem to form part of a broader campaign against a left-liberal order including gender and sexuality rights, a common phenomenon in many countries where right-wing populists have gained power. Already in October 2018, fifteen intellectuals alerted voters to the grave threat Bolsonaro would pose to Brazil's new democracy – these figures included Noam Chomsky, Chico Buarque and the UN high commissioner Paulo S. Pinheiro. Spotlighting the rise in hate crime against LGBT people, women, the opponents of radical right-wing candidates and journalists, they warned: 'We fear that this is only a foretaste of a deadlier wave of violence' (Chomsky et al.).

Dismantling human rights and memory institutions or practices

Since taking office in January 2019, Bolsonaro and his staff have been attacking numerous Brazilian memory and justice actors, institutions and networks. Yet Bolsonaro's attacks prompted precisely those entrepreneurs to resist the government and his radical supporters within the judiciary and society. Both private and public actors and institutions are trying to stop the falsification of historical accounts, by recounting the systematic violence perpetrated under the dictatorship and doing their utmost to force the government to abide by the Brazilian constitution.

Bolsonaro has staffed his cabinet with civilian and military personnel who praise violence and support his project to dismantle human rights and memory institutions. More than a third

of the posts in his government, including the presidency and the vice-presidency, are staffed by former or active military personnel. In contrast to 1964, when military officers seized power without any legitimization by the Brazilian people, Bolsonaro embarked upon the 'militarization' of the country after being elected in a formally democratic process. Still, it should be noted that during the election campaign his supporters intimidated regime survivors, left-wing militants and social movements both in the streets and on social media, and that WhatsApp bots were used to promote Bolsonaro's candidacy (Hermann, *Lügen*). His first move to attack the human rights and academic community involved appointing a conservative evangelical pastor as the new Minister of Family, Women and Human Rights, Damares Alves, and an unqualified, pro-dictatorship 'Education Minister', Ricardo Vélez. Both serve as 'gatekeepers' or even outright wreckers of democratic human rights and education policies in the country.

Damares Alves now presides over the regulations of the Amnesty Commission, the institution responsible for adjudging the reparation cases of former regime victims (Phillips). She has already dismissed experienced commissioners and appointed João Henrique de Freitas as the new president of the Amnesty Commission, ex-assistant of Bolsonaro's son Flávio. In the past, de Freitas has launched judicial actions to reverse reparation payments granted by the Amnesty Commission. He tried to block payments to forty-four rural *campesinos* imprisoned in the north-eastern region of Araguaia in the 1970s, and to annul reparation payments to Carlos Lamarca, a military general who later joined the anti-regime guerrillas (Turollo).

Brazil's new Education Minister, Ricardo Vélez, has announced a revision of school textbooks to offer pupils what he calls 'a broader version of history'. He denies that the 1964 military ousting is properly classified as a coup and describes the dictatorship as 'a democratic regime by force' (BBC, *Textbooks*). The President of the Brazilian Association of Textbooks, Cândido Grangeiro, immediately rejected Vélez's plan, contending that revisions of pedagogic material have to be based on extensive academic research rather than 'opinions'. Bolsonaro and Vélez have also publicly argued that the Nazis were a 'left-wing movement' (BBC, *Textbooks*). Meanwhile, Vélez has been replaced.

Lastly, to give an example that may stand in for many other such measures, Bolsonaro effected a U-turn in memory politics by ordering the celebration of the 55th anniversary of the military coup. While his official decree and the opposition it faced were amply covered in the media, the press remained silent on the actual form and impact of the celebrations. Bolsonaro himself was in Israel at the time, supporting the right-wing candidate Benjamin Netanyahu during his presidential campaign. Opposition to the commemoration plans took three main forms: judicial actions, statements of protest and petitions, and cultural-artistic counter-events under the banner 'Dictatorship: Never Again'.

The Brazilian Federal Public Defender's Office and families of the dead and disappeared launched a number of different judicial actions, but all were ultimately blocked. The Federal Public Defender's Office issued an urgent petition against Bolsonaro's order (SEI/DPU 28973344), demanding, among other things, that the celebrations be barred, because terrible atrocities had been committed during those years, as the Truth Commission Report had shown. Furthermore, it was declared that no public funds should be spent on such events. In the first instance, the appeal succeeded. Judge Ivani Silva da Luz ruled to bar the celebration, arguing that it was incompatible with 'the process of democratic reconstruction' and required the approval of Congress (BBC, *Barred*). His decision, however, was quickly overturned by the appeals judge, Maria do Carmo Cardoso, who accepted the government's argument that Brazil's democracy was sufficiently robust for a 'pluralism of ideas'. She did not see any 'violation of human rights' and claimed that 'similar demonstrations took place in the barracks in preceding years, with no negative consequences' (BBC, *Overturms*). While it is true that several revisionist military clubs had commemorated the date in previous years, they had done so privately and not by presidential order, and in a less polarized climate.

A similarly contested decision was taken by Supreme Court judge Gilmar Mendes, who rejected a writ of mandamus (*mandado de segurança*), a judicial action that citizens can apply when the state issues an order that violates the constitution. It was launched by survivors of the dictatorship, who argued that their right to memory and truth was denied, that the order violated both international human rights legislation and the Brazilian constitution, and therefore constituted an illegal act. It also implied a link between the coup celebrations and the decline of democracy by stating: ‘Democracy and torture do not go hand in hand.’⁴ In solidarity with the plaintiffs, human rights activists and academics signed a petition to support the appeal. Supreme Court judge Mendes, however, ruled that the presidential order did not violate the victims’ rights, because it would only represent ‘an act of (personal) opinion’ (Osmo and Tavares).

As the legal experts Osmo and Tavares demonstrated, though, Mendes and do Carmo Cardoso contradicted each other; while Mendes justified Bolsonaro’s celebration in terms of his personal opinion, the appeals judge justified it on the basis that the ceremony would ‘presuppose a plurality of debates and ideas’ (Osmo and Tavares). Overall, Mendes’s decision would appear to have been a political act in support of Bolsonaro, a fact that simply underscores the accusation that key members of the current judiciary are highly politicized – even to the point of acting against the Brazilian Constitution.

Besides judicial opposition, public and civil society entities, domestic and international academic associations and the United Nations have issued statements of protest. On 26 March 2019, Brazil’s Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office (MPF) condemned the celebration of the coup, arguing that it would praise ‘an unconstitutional regime responsible for serious [...] human rights violations’, and therefore ‘deserve[s] social and political repudiation’ (BBC, *Barred*). The Brazilian Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados Brasileiros; OAB) stressed that in an already divided nation like Brazil, such an event would only rekindle the hatreds of the past (OAB). Fabián Salvioli, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence, condemned Bolsonaro’s plans, stating: ‘Attempts to revise history and justify or condone gross human rights violations of the past must be clearly rejected by all authorities and society as a whole.’ (Salvioli).

Finally, leading domestic and international academic associations and research institutes issued statements of protest and concern (SBTHH; BRASA; CJT). In a public note from 17 April 2019, seventeen national academic institutes from various disciplines, ranging from the National Historical Association to the Brazilian Association of Geographers expressed their ‘indignation’ over recent comments of government officials on the history of Brazil, marked by ‘negations and revisionism’ and lacking any scientific basis (SBTHH). Numerous research institutes in Brazil have issued statements and organized academic discussions, including the Transitional Justice Study Centre (CJT) at the Federal University of Minas Gerais and leading historical experts at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

The largest international academic organization, the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA), had already issued a statement of concern on 15 November 2018. There BRASA expresses its ‘solidarity and emphatic support to educational professionals and students [...] who have been subjected to the curtailment of their freedom of expression, the monitoring of their political positions, and [...] threats and violence’, in violation of the Brazilian constitution (BRASA 2018). The note calls upon the Brazilian Supreme Court to defend educators and end censorship and prosecution. BRASA furthermore attacks the draft of decree law 7180/40, which prohibits human rights topics such as gender discrimination and claims to privilege ‘family values [...] related to moral, sexual and religious education’, a euphemism for an evangelically inspired attack on gender or race equality, and on LGBT people. This attack aligns

⁴ All translations by the author. The petition was emailed among human rights networks.

with transnational trends involving assaults on left-wing liberal rights, in particular gender and sexuality rights. Importantly, the decree may serve as a pretext to discharge politically inconvenient teachers.

Finally, opponents were joined by human rights and memory groups or institutions that organized cultural-artistic counter-events. To give just one example, on 30 March 2019 the São Paulo-based memory and human rights institute Núcleo Memória ('Ato') organized a cultural event with musicians and actors in front of the former torture centre in Rua Tutóia 921 (Vila Mariana), attended by around 500 people. Then on 1 April 2019, a silent march was organized by a collective including the MPF, the CEMDP and the Federal Office for the Protection of Citizen Rights. The march in remembrance of victims of the regime took place in Ibirapuera Park, a kind of 'Central Park' for São Paulo, and included a show by the singer Renato Brás. According to Núcleo Memória ('Ato'), approximately 12,000 people attended the event.

Overall, opposition to the commemoration plans was organized by a variety of domestic and international protagonists and took diverse forms. These actors and institutions are currently joining forces to monitor and denounce the government's attempts to falsify history and threaten activists and intellectuals. Some have started to build more robust networks. In March 2019, for instance, a Brazilian Network for Memory Sites was created to combine forces and ensure the required funding (REBRALUME, Rede Brasileira de Lugares de Memória; Núcleo Memória, 'Ato'). Collectively, they regard revisionist measures like celebration of the dictatorship, the manipulation of educational materials and the undermining of memory and human rights institutions as a violation of the Brazilian constitution and a threat to democracy.

Concluding reflections

While the reasons for Bolsonaro's rise are complex, his popularity shows that few Brazilian voters consider addressing the history of the Brazilian dictatorship to be a primary political concern. The comparatively timid steps taken by a few Brazilian state officials – even under left-wing governments – were insufficient to prevent the clear victory of a president who has openly been justifying violence. Large parts of society and even artists, too, have perpetuated a culture of impunity by safeguarding an uncritical view of the 1979 Brazilian amnesty as 'reciprocally beneficial'.

Even if a sustained memory politics in post-authoritarian Brazil was relatively timid, the question remains whether a more engaged accountability and memory politics would have undermined support for a candidate of this sort. Bolsonaro represents a test case in this regard. We should discuss whether the old memory and accountability tools, and their underlying assumption – that they have the capacity to prevent new forms of violence – are in need of an overhaul. Fundamentally, these assumptions are based on a linear understanding of history, implying that humans become better as they learn from the past. Brazil is not the only country currently facing right-wing populism. Even in Germany, where critical education regarding the Nazi regime has been at the core of school curricula and official ceremonies, and where Holocaust deniers face strict criminal charges, the right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD) is on the rise and antisemitic crimes are proliferating.

In Brazil, the human rights and memory actors currently offering resistance are increasingly subject to intimidation and even violence. Bolsonaro's supporters have called upon students to denounce school and university professors who criticize the government, even recording what they say on their smartphones (Glüsing; BRASA).⁵ Intellectuals who have not

⁵ Other right-wing parties across the world have likewise called for this sort of denunciation to be practised, for instance the German AfD.

already left Brazil are starting to go into exile, among them the elected deputy of Rio de Janeiro, Jean Wyllys, of the left-wing party PSOL. A vociferous opponent of Bolsonaro, Wyllys was the only representative in the Brazilian parliament to be openly homosexual (Barros). Following the assassination of the popular lesbian feminist and anti-racist activist, Marielle Franco, Wyllys had been living for several months under police protection, until the IACHR warned that the governmental protection service offered to him was in fact far from robust. In addition, the press has recently revealed a direct link between Bolsonaro's family and the murderers of Marielle Franco (Hermann, *Auftragskiller*; Barros). Family members of the retired military police officer supposed to have masterminded her assassination had been working for Bolsonaro's son Flávio, now a senator-elect.

The Bolsonaro government – which campaigned on the ticket of transparency and anti-corruption – has also lately passed a decree to undermine the Freedom of Information Act, by allowing a greater number of civil servants to classify information as 'ultra-secret' (whereby files remain closed for up to twenty-five years); this is a measure aiming to protect government members and their allies from accountability and unwelcome investigations (Michener and Niskier). By weakening accountability and strengthening impunity, the new decree facilitates further oppression and violence against regime opponents, especially human rights and memory entrepreneurs on the front line.

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How to cite this article: Schneider, N 2020 Bolsonaro in Power: Failed Memory Politics in Post-Authoritarian Brazil? *Modern Languages Open*, 2020(1): 25 pp. 1–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.324>

Published: 04 August 2020

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