



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 14, 2016

It Looks Like the End Is Near for Brazil's President Rouseff

Brazilian President Dilma Rouseff (shown) is running out of time, support and friends.

A protégé of former President Lula, also of the Workers Party, Rouseff served in his cabinet as finance minister. She also chaired the board of Petrobras, the Brazilian-owned oil company that is being investigated for various pay-to-play schemes that rewarded both politicians and Petrobras executives handsomely. With her polling numbers just above single digits, she just can't seem to catch a break. Her biggest problem seems to be that, as president, she is a prime target for a country's citizenry who, after 13 years of rule by the hard-core left-wing Workers' Party, are finally giving up on her. In fact, nearly seven million angry Brazilians turned out for mass protest marches all over the country last month. Especially annoying to them is her continued insistence that she is innocent of all charges despite being at the very center of various scandals the details of which are being exposed on an almost daily basis.



On Monday a congressional committee [recommended her impeachment](#). On Tuesday, another one of her ruling party's coalition split. This coming Sunday, the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house, votes on her impeachment.

Impeachment is looking increasingly likely. It takes two-thirds of the 513 members of the Chamber to vote to impeach her. Earlier this week, there were 298 deputies already announcing their intention to vote for impeachment while just 120 support Rouseff.

But Rouseff has announced that she will fight the impeachment vote in court if it goes against her: "We will appeal with every legal method available." If she does indeed appeal to the Supreme Federal Tribunal, Brazil's "Supreme Court," the Senate could wait months before taking up the matter, provided the case is not thrown out. Then the Senate must vote by simple majority to even start a trial, which could last for months. If the case does move to the Senate she will be relieved of her duties and her vice president, Michel Temer, will take over as interim president. Temer conveniently leaked his 15-minute acceptance speech to the press earlier this week, further inflaming the debate. For Rouseff to be removed from office, 54 of the 81 senators would need to convict her.

The corruption that surrounds, and is about to engulf, Rouseff also envelops those around her. A



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Brazilian court has ruled that the legislature must bring impeachment proceedings against Temer for charges similar to those being brought against Rousseff — using state bank money to fund their 2014 reelection campaigns. And the speaker of the house, Eduardo Cunha, is facing charges stemming from the scandal involving Petrobras.

Some commentators close to the unfolding carnage are suggesting that Cunha deliberately opened impeachment proceedings against Rousseff to deflect attention away from his own legal troubles. Attorney General José Eduardo Cardozo said, “This process of impeachment is born of original sin, which was the use of it by the house speaker [Cunha] for revenge.”

Protests and riots are expected on Sunday, regardless of how the vote goes. Police barriers are already in place.

Various parties making up Rousseff’s ruling coalition are leaving the scene as quickly as they can, hoping to distance themselves from the increasingly toxic fallout. On Wednesday the Social Democratic Party (PSD) decided to recommend that its members vote in favor of impeachment, following by the defection of the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB). The Progressive Party (PP) announced that its members were free to vote as they choose on Sunday, while Brazil’s largest political party, of which Temer is a member, the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), also voted to leave the coalition. Said Rafael Cortez, a political consultant on the scene, the defections “have made an impeaching trial in the Senate almost inevitable.”

Corruption in the Brazilian government runs wide and deep. By 2012, 25 people had already been caught and convicted in relation to the 2005 Mensalão scandal, in which public funds were used to bribe members of congress in exchange for votes on various crucial issues. These included Lula’s chief of staff, the former head of Lula’s and Rousseff’s Workers’ Party, along with the marketing director of the Banco do Brasil, Brazil’s largest bank.

The investigation known as Operation Car Wash has already snared and convicted dozens involved in the Petrobras scandal, including the head of the Odebrecht Organization, the treasurer of the Workers’ Party, and another Petrobras executive in on the scheme.

Is there anyone unsullied by these scandals and corruption in Brazil? Little is known about José Eduardo Cardozo, as he just assumed office as Brazil’s attorney general last month, but he sports membership in the far-left Workers’ Party and is a lawyer. Sergio Moro, the federal judge and chief prosecutor in Operation Car Wash, is also a lawyer with connections to Harvard Law School.

Assuming that Rousseff loses the vote on Sunday, she will be replaced with a scoundrel. If he fails the next regular election, he is likely to be followed by another one. When does it end?

In the meantime Brazil’s unhappy citizenry will continue to suffer under the consequences of socialism: unemployment and inflation hitting double digits, the economy shrinking by an estimated four percent a year, and the local currency, the real, continuing to lose its purchasing power (having lost more than a third of it against the dollar in just the last year alone).

Photo: AP Images

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