

# The winds of June still blowing in Brazil

Strikes and protests remain center-stage

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On Friday 25 October, teachers in the State of Rio de Janeiro went back to work after 78 days on strike, and with a growing solidarity movement behind them. The local education authorities had agreed to a pay rise of 15%, the payment of strike days lost and a number of other benefits. One day earlier, oil workers across Brazil also returned to work after a one week strike against the first round of tendering exploitation rights in the huge Libra oil field, deep below the ocean off the coast of Rio de Janeiro. They hadn't stopped the auction, but they too won a significant wage increase from the semi-state oil company, Petrobras. This declaration by Insurgencia, a new current of revolutionaries within the Brazilian PSOL, was issued the weekend before, while both strikes were in full swing. [IVP]

In these final months of the year, we are going through a process of intense struggle and confrontation that shows the new balance of forces resulting from June's mass protests.

This takes the form of important social struggles, confrontations and strikes in various sectors, alongside mass street demonstrations and the occupation of local assembly buildings.

Right now two big struggles are key: the strike by education workers in Rio de Janeiro and the oil workers' strike, which combines a fight for wages with opposition to the privatization of the giant Libra oilfield, the first big auction of Brazil's deepwater reserves. The situation took a dramatic turn when President Dilma Rousseff called on the Army and the National Public Security Force [\[1\]](#) to guarantee the sell-off, reviving oil workers' memories of 1995, when then president Fernando Henrique Cardoso called out the Army to break a historic strike.

These developments reveal a deepening polarization of society. Since June there have been a variety of struggles on almost a daily basis. There were the bank workers' and postal workers' strikes, the occupations of municipal assemblies, mass environmental struggles like that in defence of Cocó Park in Fortaleza; now there are student strikes and the occupation at the University of Sao Paulo for democratic demands, as well as demonstrations and blockades over housing, transport and health.

Rio de Janeiro in particular has seen continuous confrontations that have undermined both the municipal and state governments and show no sign of letting up. The city's biggest demonstrations since June have been in support of the teachers' strike; there's been a growing revolt in the communities against the policy of extermination carried out by the State and the military police, symbolized by the murder of bricklayer Amarildo, but which sees new cases every week - like the revolt in Manguinhos favela last week.

## **Towards a suspension of liberties**

The State and local governments have reacted by stepping up repression and seeking to criminalize these struggles and the activists involved. Faced with spreading popular struggles, the authorities adopt a tougher response, but the mobilizations, struggles and protests do not recede. This is a delicate moment, because the policy of criminalizing social struggles (which they have been preparing for over a decade), takes on a new dimension as widespread struggles continue and we draw closer to 2014 with the World Cup and elections.

The massive investments in law and order and weapons (part of the spending on the World Cup), the General World Cup Law introduced in 2011, which plans to make protests during the Cup into crimes of terrorism, the continuing extermination of young people and black people in poor and marginalized communities on the big cities, were already expressions of this underlying suspension of liberties that is emerging in the country.

Now we are in the middle of a repressive and criminalizing counter-attack, in response to the June protests. Some of the signs of this include the increasingly “normal” use of police helicopters to harass and drop tear gas and stun grenades, rubber bullets, arbitrary arrests and raids by riot police on poor neighbourhoods.

Legally speaking, the state governments of the ruling blocks, whether run by the PT and its allies or by the right-wing PSDB and the like, are preparing to respond through the courts, with the passing of legislation like that in Rio de Janeiro that outlaws wearing masks on protests, or the attempts both in Rio and Sao Paulo to bring protesters under the National Security Law or to charge them with forming gangs.

To dispel any illusions that this policy is only being pursued by certain allies of the PT-led federal government, like Governor Sergio Cabral and Mayor Eduardo Paes in Rio [2], directly PT regional governments have also been persecuting and criminalizing the movement and its activists, as in Rio Grande do Sul and Brasília. While to finish off this sinister picture, there in the background is the Dilma government, invoking the Army to guarantee the privatization of Brazil’s deepwater reserves.

The scale of repression has moved up a level, after years of criminalizing the social movements, exterminating young black people, and assassinating indigenous and peasant leaders and those who support them.

## **Repression in the service of mega-events**

This policy of widespread criminalization corresponds to the aim of capital and the administrations that serve it, to open the way for big business ventures and deals around mega-events like the World Cup and mega-projects linked to the federal government’s Accelerated Growth Programme (PAC) and to property speculation in the big cities. Part of this project involves breaking the resistance of all sectors of the working class and youth.

For capital, the evictions must go ahead in the favelas; access to the cities must be controlled, confining the poorest sectors to veritable ghettos. In the case of the World Cup, it’s similar to what was done in South Africa in 2010; the massive spending on the World Cup must continue in order to service FIFA’s private business interests. And so, realizing that there will be another wave of protests in 2014 as the World Cup approaches, the State is doing all it can to hold back by force the human tide coming from the streets.

## **The strength of the tide coming from the streets. In the streets, alongside the struggles and against the repression!**

Given this situation, and as part of the broad growth of social struggles in Brazil, there is an urgent need for a political, democratic campaign for the demilitarization of the police! We need to organize a campaign to put an end to what has been the State's main instrument of repression in recent decades and which is now strengthening its role with these policies of criminalization and extermination in defence of the business system. The true law and order policy of the Brazilian State is to use a brutal state apparatus to protect private business interests. We need to organize committees up and down the country, take this demand into all the protests, forums and other activities of the movement, and hold debates in the universities, neighbourhoods and trade unions. And these actions need to be built in the broadest, most united way possible, to raise the demand for demilitarization across society.

Alongside this campaign, we need broad condemnation of the repression and criminalization of the struggles, the activists and the poor; we fight against all attempts to outlaw or prohibit aspects of the movement, and for the repeal of all repressive laws and other means of suspending or limiting freedoms, whether these are directed at the strike movements and their leaders, at community struggles or at youth activists, be they party members, autonomists or "black block".

No less important at the moment is a broad and active campaign of solidarity with all the strikes, street demonstrations, occupations and social struggles, over transport, housing, education, and health. Most important of all, we need a campaign in support of the oil workers' strike, against the privatization of the deepwater reserves and deployment of the Army.

We are side by side with the oil workers, the Rio teachers, the popular movements fighting for housing and against evictions, the students who occupy university offices and go on strike, and the indigenous people who struggle for their lands against agribusiness.

***Down with repression, demilitarize the police now!***

Down with repression, get the Army off the streets!

No privatization of the Libra deepwater oil field!

All support to the oil workers' and Rio de Janeiro teachers' strike!

**National Executive of Insurgência, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013**

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View online : [João Machado](http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/)

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**P.S.**

\* Traduction International Viewpoint. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

\* Insurgencia is a current in the PSOL formed over recent months from a fusion between Enlace, the current that organized supporters of the Fourth International, the CSOL (Socialism and Freedom Collective), one of several currents that came out of the Moreno tradition of Trotskyism in Brazil,

along with the Red Struggle Collective (CLV) and other smaller groupings and individuals.

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## Footnotes

[1] Set up in 2004 during the first Lula government, the National Public Security Force is a coordination of Brazil's various state-level, Military Police forces, overseen by the head of the Federal Police and including an elite Quick Deployment Special Battalion, for use anywhere in the country.

[2] Sergio Cabral and Eduardo Paes are both members of the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), the largest centre-right party in Brazil and the most important partner of the Workers' Party (PT) in the federal government.