

# Stop the Steal 2.0

HOW META IS SUBVERTING BRAZILIAN DEMOCRACY



# Introduction

In a few weeks, Brazil will go to the polls to elect a new President, but already the incumbent, Jair Bolsonaro, is mobilizing his supporters to attack Brazil's democratic institutions and spread disinformation about the electoral system — and Meta is helping him do it.

Trailing badly in the polls, Bolsonaro urged tens of thousands of supporters in a July speech 'to take to the streets for one last time' on September 7th, Brazil's Independence Day.<sup>1</sup> Military parades have been scheduled to take place that day, and Bolsonaro is also calling on the military to join the protests in the streets.

Bolsonaro's incendiary language and recent criticisms about the country's electronic voting system and Supreme Court<sup>2</sup>, which adjudicates on the integrity of elections, are fueling fears that he

is planning a military coup. This threat isn't new. Bolsonaro tried to stoke an uprising on September 7th last year<sup>3</sup>, and while it didn't succeed, the attempt demonstrated the President's willingness to subvert Brazilian democracy for his own political gain and stoked concerns about the country's future.<sup>4</sup>

Recently, Bolsonaro said that he would only leave the Republic's Presidency dead<sup>5</sup>, because it was God who put him there to fight communism. He has also fiercely attacked electronic ballot boxes<sup>6</sup>, electoral courts and judges<sup>7</sup>, and justices of the Supreme Court<sup>8</sup> as well as repeatedly casting doubt over the upcoming election results and threatening to refuse to recognize the results<sup>9</sup>. He has explicitly threatened to launch a coup and insinuated support from the Armed Forces<sup>10</sup>.

1 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/27/stop-steal-brazils-bolsonaro-looks-poised-start-it/>  
extract of the speech in Portuguese available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_WBDNZbTyUY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WBDNZbTyUY)

2 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/11/brazilians-protest-for-democracy-as-bolsonaro-threatens-election>

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/06/brazil-warning-bolsonaro-may-be-planning-military-coup-amid-rallies>

4 <https://www.vox.com/2021/9/8/22620570/bolsonaro-brazil-september-7-democracy-supreme-court>

5 <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/bolsonaro-says-he-will-be-arrested-killed-or-declared-winner-2021-08-28/>

6 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-18/bolsonaro-calls-ambassadors-to-cast-doubt-on-electoral-system>

7 <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220815-target-of-bolsonaro-attacks-to-become-brazil-election-court-chief>

8 <https://www.dw.com/en/brazil-bolsonaro-attacks-supreme-court-ahead-of-election/a-60404576>

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

10 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/12/world/americas/brazil-election-bolsonaro-military.html>

A SumOfUs investigation has uncovered damning evidence that platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are being used by Bolsonaro and his allies to push election lies and grow Brazil's own 'Stop the Steal' movement – and Meta is profiting directly from it. Researchers uncovered:

- Multiple examples of Facebook ads that break the federal government's own pre-electoral advertising rules;
- An ecosystem of posts and ads echoing the far-right's cry for a violent uprising on September 7th, peddling conspiracy theories about the integrity of the election and candidates, and attacking democratic institutions and public officials;
- Surging levels of extremist rhetoric on WhatsApp and Telegram groups about staging a military coup, removing Supreme Court justices and questioning the integrity of the electronic voting system.

This isn't the first time Meta has been complicit in the spread of election disinformation and incitement of real world political violence. Kenya<sup>11</sup>, Myanmar<sup>12</sup> and of course the January 6th U.S. Capitol insurrection are all chilling examples of how Meta's algorithms, tools and lax policy enforcement have pushed democracies to breaking point. Despite its much repeated commitment to protecting elections and increasing transparency and accountability around political ads, Meta appears to be repeating past mistakes in Brazil.

Days after the January 6th insurrection, Meta's then Chief Operating Officer, Sheryl Sandberg, downplayed Facebook's role as an organizing platform for the right-wing extremists who stormed the Capitol<sup>13</sup> – a position later proved untenable. Now a Brazilian insurrection, using the same playbook as the US' Stop the Steal movement, is being organized on Facebook and WhatsApp. And once again Meta's response is woefully inadequate. Alarm bells should be ringing both for Meta's senior leadership and electoral regulators in Brazil and beyond.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/kenyas-cohesion-watchdog-gives-meta-7-days-comply-with-regulations-2022-07-29/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-election-facebook-idCAKBN27L300>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/01/13/facebook-role-in-capitol-protest/>

## Meta is monetizing and getting rich off ads inciting a violent coup

With political tensions running high in Brazil and the country facing the threat of an antidemocratic uprising, Meta is routinely approving ads that are inciting violence, spreading disinformation and throwing doubt on the integrity of the upcoming elections. Many of the ads identified by SumOfUs researchers are also illegal under Brazilian law as well as falling foul of Meta's own policies.<sup>14</sup>

Using 8 hashtags commonly associated with the September 7th rallies often linked to different political spectrums and neutral terms. Researchers then manually identified ads that were clearly election-focused and reduced the sample to 2,821 ads. All of these ads were published by just 19 different accounts, most of them candidates and politicians.

From this sample, we analyzed 36 problematic ads – 16 ads related to the antidemocratic rallies on Independence Day; 10 electoral ads were before the permitted election campaign period and another 10 ads contained political attacks, fake news and hate speech.

Many ads, while not overtly calling for an armed uprising, employed dog whistle phrases like “let’s claim our independence again”, which in Brazil’s current political context would be well understood by the recipients as antidemocratic messaging. Considering these alongside more explicit posts and public statements advocating violence, we start to get a clearer view of the coordinated effort to build a coup movement via social media and messaging apps.

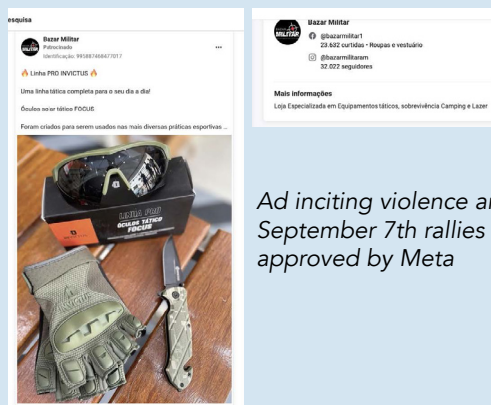
As well as giving a platform to false and misleading content, SumOfUs researchers found that **Facebook**

**has enabled advertisers to breach Brazilian electoral law by posting electoral ads outside of the permitted period.** These laws prohibit candidates running for election on October 2nd from directly soliciting votes before August 16th,<sup>15</sup> yet our investigation identified 10 get out the vote ads for specific candidates that were approved by Facebook prior to that date.

## Examples of ads promoting September 7th rallies and inciting violence

In total, **this relatively small sample of 16 ads related to antidemocratic rallies on Sept 7th analyzed in this report, had racked up 615,000 impressions by 26th August 2022.** It illustrates again Facebook’s role in pumping out violent and hateful content to large numbers of users.

One ad<sup>16</sup>, which was taken down before the release of this report, features a military combat knife and gear with hashtags related to the 7th September rallies. It ran during the week of August 25th. Some of the hashtags included were #snipers #armamentists #military #septemberseven #nationweek #brazil #7september. Despite the ad take-down, an almost identical post<sup>17</sup> remains up on the shop page ‘[Military Bazar](#)’ since Aug 23rd. SumOfUs has reported the post.



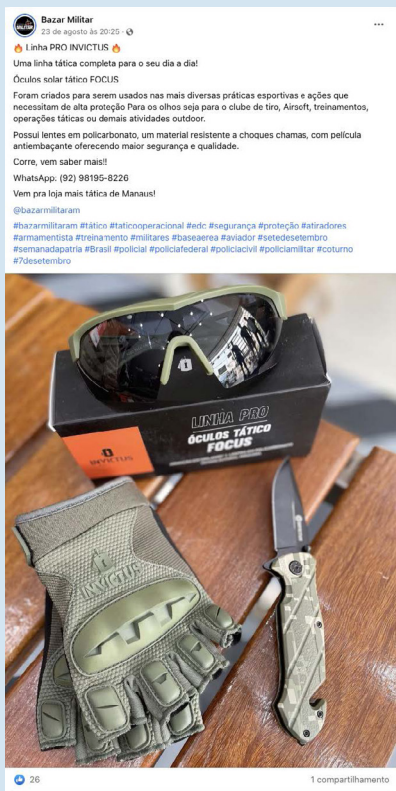
*Ad inciting violence around the September 7th rallies was approved by Meta*

<sup>14</sup> <https://transparency.fb.com/en-gb/policies/community-standards/misinformation/> - see 'I. Physical harm or violence' section.

<sup>15</sup> Brazilian Electoral Tribunal: <https://www.tse.jus.br/comunicacao/noticias/2022/Agosto/eleicoes-2022-propaganda-eleitoral-esta-liberada-a-partir-de-hoje-16>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=995887468477017> Despite several attempts, Facebook Ads are not possible to archive, hence why we can't provide archived links of the ads. The complete list of the hashtags were: #militarybazar #tactical #tacticaloperational #edc #security #protection #snipers #armamentist #training #military #aerialbase #aviator #septemberseven #nationweek #brazil #police #federalpolice #police #militarypolice #boots #7september.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/bazarmilitar1/posts/pfbid034iUcR8uGQsdgXu1TffKezUN7RZLUDueBqJh9XiA5KXhUhS9q8sTwgwuN8EgGCjh3l/> / <https://archive.ph/wip/FehCt>



Post depicting military combat knife and gear with September 7th hashtags remains up. SumOfUs has reported it.

**Ellen Miziara**  
Sponsored • Paid for by Ellen Ferreira

"Eu juro dar a minha vida pela minha liberdade!"

Na convenção da executiva nacional do PL no fim da manhã deste domingo, o presidente Jair Bolsonaro foi aclamado e fez uma convocação à Nação brasileira:...

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

**Inativo**  
25 de Jul de 2022 a 29 de Jul de 2022  
Identificação: 788325128836658

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionaram quando criam um anúncio. [Ver mais](#)

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
**> 1 mi pessoas**

**Valor gasto**  
O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. [Saiba mais](#)

**Valor gasto**  
**R\$200 a R\$299 (BRL)**

**Impressões**  
O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. [Saiba mais](#)

**Impressões**  
**60 mil a 70 mil**

**Para quem esse anúncio foi mostrado**  
O detalhamento por idade e gênero das pessoas que viram esse anúncio.

[Homens](#) [Mulheres](#) [Desconhecido](#)

Bolsonaro ally Ellen Miziara's video calling for people to take to the streets to defend their flag and fight the war of "good against evil" receives 60,000-70,000 impressions

On another Instagram ad<sup>18</sup>, [Ellen Miziara](#), an election candidate and ally of Bolsonaro posted a video pledging to give her life for her liberty, and implores others to join her on the streets: "I swear to give my life for my liberty. (...) He [Bolsonaro] made a call for us patriots to take to the streets on September 7 for the last time to defend the colors of this flag [while waving the Brazilian flag]. (...) Let's take the streets to defend our country, our flag, our values... **it's not just an election, it's a war of good against evil, it's a fight!** So let's fight! Let's fight for our country! On September 7 I'm going to the streets, are you coming with me?" The video also shows a clip from a Bolsonaro speech, in which he says to supporters "I call upon you now to go to the streets one last time on Sept 7th".

According to Meta's ad library, this ad received between **60,000 and 70,000 impressions**, and despite being a clear appeal to voters, the ad ran freely from July 25-28th, therefore potentially breaching Brazilian electoral law.

Some of the posts use white supremacist dog whistles to activate far right groups. For example one ad<sup>19</sup> posted by a [military captain](#) references the phrase 'Mission given is mission accomplished!'. This echoes a slogan associated with the tactical police unit Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais (BOPE), infamous for its brutal and violent methods. The ad tells 'patriots to get ready!' and has been published multiple times on Facebook and Instagram. The video also shows a clip from a Bolsonaro speech telling supporters "I call upon you now to go to the streets one last time on Sept 7th". This ad received between **45,000 to 50,000 impressions**, and despite being a clear electoral appeal to voters, ran freely between 27th and 31st July, therefore, potentially breaching Brazilian electoral law.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=788325128836658>  
<sup>19</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=337488015128470>

**Sobre o anúncio**

**Capitão Contar**  
 Patrocinado · Pago por Renan Barbosa Costar  
 Identificação: 337488015128470

#podecontarcornigo Presidente Bolsonaro!

Missão dada é missão cumprida!  
 Vamos às ruas dia 07 de setembro em defesa do Brasil e do futuro de todos os brasileiros!

Preparem-se, patriotas! 🇧🇷...

**MATO GROSSO DO SUL**  
**VAMOS ÀS RUAS DIA 07/09**

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
 27 de Jul de 2022 a 30 de Jul de 2022  
 Identificação: 337488015128470

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
 O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio... [Ver mais](#)

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
**>1 mi pessoas**

**Valor gasto**  
 O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. [Saiba mais](#)

**Valor gasto**  
**<R\$100 (BRL)**

**Impressões**  
 O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. [Saiba mais](#)

**Impressões**  
**45 mil a 50 mil**

**Para quem esse anúncio foi mostrado**  
 O detalhamento por idade e gênero das pessoas que viram esse anúncio.

Ad from a military captain tells patriots to “get ready”, received between 45,000-50,000 impressions. The post reads several hashtags clearly signaling to the elections, such as #jairbolsonaro2022

And another posted by election candidate<sup>20</sup> [Lauro Belchior](#), which racked up **10,000 impressions**, tells supporters “we will take to the streets to fight for FREEDOM.” It ran freely between 20th and 24th July, therefore, potentially breaching Brazilian electoral law.

**Sobre o anúncio**

**Lauro Belchior - Não Cruze os Braços**  
 Patrocinado · Pago por Lana Bernades De Oliveira  
 Identificação: 7628979133840579

Dia 07 de setembro vamos sair às ruas para lutar por LIBERDADE!  
 Vamos continuar a luta por um BRASIL melhor para nossos filhos e netos!  
 Não se omite. o futuro das próximas gerações estão em jogo!  
 Local: Estacionamento do Parque do Sabá - Uberlândia / MG...

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
 20 de Jul de 2022 a 24 de Jul de 2022  
 Identificação: 7628979133840579

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
 O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio... [Ver mais](#)

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
**500 mil a 1 mi pessoas**

**Valor gasto**  
 O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. [Saiba mais](#)

**Valor gasto**  
**<R\$100 (BRL)**

**Impressões**  
 O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. [Saiba mais](#)

**Impressões**  
**9 mil a 10 mil**

**Para quem esse anúncio foi mostrado**  
 O detalhamento por idade e gênero das pessoas que viram esse anúncio.

**Homens** **Mulheres** **Desconhecido**

Election candidate Lauro Belchior’s post claiming he will “fight for freedom” on September 7th and received around 10,000 impressions. The image shows the candidate hugging Bolsonaro and says “pre-candidate to State MP”

In the context of Bolsonaro and his allies’ comments about a military coup, these ads heighten the risk of violence and disruption on September 7th.

## Examples of ads that are in clear violation of Brazilian electoral law

Running freely from August 4th to August 8th<sup>21</sup>, this early electoral campaign from an [MP candidate](#) gained **approximately 100,000 impressions**. It uses the elections related hashtags, and describes how this is a decisive election – Brazil’s “last chance to correct the mistakes”.

**Sobre o anúncio**

**Alé Portela**  
 Patrocinado · Pago por Alessandra Portela  
 Identificação: 719007432533490

DEPENDE DE NÓS. O FUTURO DO BRASIL ESTÁ EM JOGO

Essa eleição é uma oportunidade histórica (e única) para o povo brasileiro dizer “não” ao ativismo judicial, que tanto estrago tem causado ao país, e dizer, também, um sonoro “não” à ocupação de espaços no judiciário por parte da esquerda - que já vem num processo de ocupação de espaços há décadas, mesmo porque foram 25 anos de governos de esquerda...

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
 4 de Ago de 2022 a 8 de Ago de 2022  
 Identificação: 719007432533490

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
 O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio... [Ver mais](#)

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
**>1 mi pessoas**

**Valor gasto**  
 O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante programação. [Saiba mais](#)

**Valor gasto**  
**R\$100 a R\$199 (BRL)**

**Impressões**  
 O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. [Saiba mais](#)

**Impressões**  
**90 mil a 100 mil**

**Para quem esse anúncio foi mostrado**  
 O detalhamento por idade e gênero das pessoas que viram esse anúncio.

**Homens** **Mulheres** **Desconhecido**

An election ad from an MP candidate that gained 90,000-100,000 impressions before the permitted period for election ads according to Brazilian electoral law

20 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=7628979133840579>

21 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=719007432533490>

This ad,<sup>22</sup> shown between August 8th and 11th, clearly conflicts with Brazilian electoral law as it asks for votes for a senator's allied candidate, plus two other candidates, outside of the permitted period. It racked up between **25,000 and 30,000 impressions**.

An ad showing two MP candidates and one Senator candidate and asking for votes. It gained between 25,000 and 30,000 impressions

The ad below<sup>23</sup> ran on August 13th and clearly violates Brazilian electoral law as it shows five candidates' pictures with their names and the office they are running for. It racked up around **8,000 impressions**.

Brazilian election candidates running Facebook ads for their campaigns before the permitted period according to Brazilian electoral law

This electoral ad was created by Bolsonaro's [political party \(PL\)](#) and casts doubt on the credibility of polling organizations, suggesting that recent polls showing Lula winning are fake, and that Bolsonaro is actually winning the presidential race.<sup>24</sup> It racked up around **2,000 impressions**.

Ad run by Bolsonaro's party casting doubt on polling results and claiming Bolsonaro is winning the race

It is hard to square Meta's public commitment to preserving electoral integrity with such lax ad approvals. **These examples are just a sample, so we can assume are the tip of the iceberg, and suggest a disregard from Meta for Brazilian electoral law.**

For further examples, please see the Annex below.

## Undermining trust through disinformation & hate campaigns

Facebook is also allowing ads that personally attack candidates and public officials as well as public institutions, like the Supreme Court. By allowing disinformation to exist and spread on its platform, **Meta is contributing to a growing distrust that is hampering the functioning of free and fair elections, and preparing the ground for bad actors to challenge the election result – as happened in the 2020 US election.**

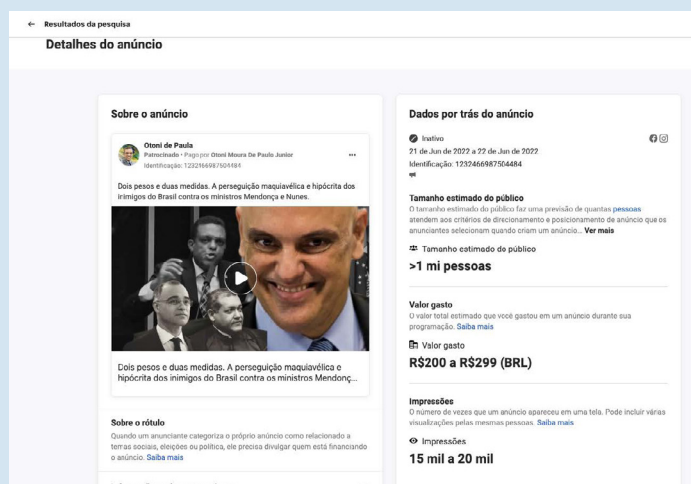
22 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=2267300470086588>

23 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=364962035664227>

24 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=366135612210120>

Within **our sample of ads**, we identified ads placed by **Bolsonaro's party and his allies attacking the Supreme Court** - an institution which would adjudicate cases about the integrity of the Presidential election.

An ad posted by [congressman Otoni de Paula](#), a close Bolsonaro ally running for reelection, includes a video claiming that the Supreme Court and Lula are conspiring to arrest Bolsonaro.<sup>25</sup> It racked up around **20,000 impressions**.



*Bolsonaro ally Otoni de Paula accusing the Supreme Court of conspiring to make an illegal arrest of Bolsonaro*

Facebook is also allowing disinformation about individual candidates to spread unchecked. For example one ad<sup>26</sup> [placed by a far-right politician](#) falsely accuses Lula of stealing public money, even though the ex-President has been cleared of all corruption allegations. This ad got around **2,000 impressions**.

25 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1232466987504484>  
 26 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=711029693336651>  
 27 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=354034303563977>



*Ad run by a far-right politician spreads misinformation about ex-President Lula*

A clear example of disinformation accepted by Meta at Instagram, this ad<sup>27</sup> posted [by a Bolsonaro far-right supporter](#), claims that the leftist candidates want “simply to put an end to police forces around the country”. This has never been part of any candidate’s policy platform. It gained around **15,000 impressions**.



*This post falsely claimed ‘the left wants to end the police force’ and gained 15,000 impressions*



Another ad<sup>28</sup> makes a baseless accusation that Lula is linked to the murder of politician Celso Daniel and falsely links his party (PT) to PCC, Brazil's biggest crime cartel. The ad had **200,000 impressions** in the 4 days it ran freely on Facebook.

Bolsonaro ally runs ad spreading misinformation about ex-President Lula, gaining around 200,000 impressions

## In the shadows: Pro-coup extremism on messaging apps

Antidemocratic forces are freely organizing on the Meta-owned messaging platform WhatsApp in the run-up to the Brazilian election. WhatsApp is the most popular social media in Brazil: the app is on 99% of Brazilians' phones<sup>29</sup>, 79% of Brazilians use the app as their main source of information and news<sup>30</sup>, and it is a major organizing tool for political groups, especially the far-right.

According to the Federal University of Minas Gerais's Whatsapp Monitor survey,<sup>31</sup> during the last week of July, which coincided with Bolsonaro's incendiary appeals to his supporters "I call upon you now to go to the streets one last time on Sept 7th"<sup>32</sup>, the number of messages mentioning the September 7th rallies rocketed by 290% compared to the same period in June. The ten most shared messages echoed extremist rhetoric about staging a military

coup, removing Supreme Court justices as well as false claims about the integrity of the electronic voting system.

Disinformation spread like wildfire on WhatsApp in the run-up to the 2018 Brazilian Presidential election,<sup>33</sup> as Meta and regulators scrambled to respond. **Four years later, SumOfUs and other research groups are again finding evidence of widespread disinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence on WhatsApp and its competitor platform, Telegram.**

SumOfUs' researchers monitored three WhatsApp groups between August 20-26th and were bombarded with messages about the September 7th rallies. One post compared the protests to Tahrir Square, citing the 18 day protest in Egypt in 2011 which ended in the overthrow of the government:



Translation:

"Egypt, Tahrir Square The Egyptians stayed in the square for 18 days, to overthrow a 30 year dictatorship. The Brazilians stay on the streets for four hours and don't yet get that a war is not won in hours. Sept. 7th it's just the beginning. 7th, 8th, 9th... until the nation's traitors are destitute. Want freedom? FIGHT Want your job? FIGHT Wanna protect your family? FIGHT It's everyone's struggle! Or we will be communist slaves. Bring your own tent. ENOUGH!!!"

28 <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1048991029080484>

29 <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/neuza-sanches/exclusivo-whatsapp-e-lider-e-esta-em-240-milhoes-de-celulares-no-brasil/>

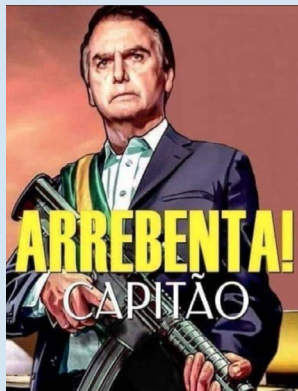
30 [https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/tecnologia/2019/12/10/interna\\_tecnologia,812946/whatsapp-e-a-principal-fonte-de-informacao-dos-brasileiros-indica-pes.shtml](https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/tecnologia/2019/12/10/interna_tecnologia,812946/whatsapp-e-a-principal-fonte-de-informacao-dos-brasileiros-indica-pes.shtml)

31 <https://www.eleicoes-sem-fake.dcc.ufmg.br>

32 See footnote 1. Extract of the speech in Portuguese available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_WBDNZbTyUY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WBDNZbTyUY) s-indica-pes.shtml

33 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/technology/whatsapp-brazil-presidential-election.html>

Another calls for a military intervention to bring Bolsonaro to power.



Translation: "Bust it Captain!"



Translation: "Bolsonaro says again: 'an armed people will never be enslaved' "

## Telegram

Research from the InternetLab and researchers from the federal universities of Bahia and Santa Catarina found that the volume of right-wing group posts on Telegram relating to September 7th increased 695% between the period of January to July this year, compared to the same period last year.<sup>34</sup>



Translation: "The Armed Forces will have to intervene!"

The research identified a turning point in June, when Bolsonaro called for September 7th to be a date to defend fairness in the election and support "a certain candidate" in an interview with SBT channel News.<sup>35</sup> After this, the daily average number of messages relating to September 7th in right-wing Telegram groups rose tenfold.

We monitored five Telegram groups and **received 18,000 messages in less than 24 hours**. The posts mirrored those on WhatsApp – incitement to violence, references to military intervention and the glorification of violence.



Translation: "The people decrees the end of communism in Brazil Destitution of all Supreme Court justices because of their unconstitutional and dictatorial actions! Criminalization: of communism and socialism New Constitution: anticommunist and antisocialist Stay on the streets in Brasília and other capitals"



Translation: "Liberty is not given... It's taken!"

<sup>34</sup> <https://internetlab.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/telegram-01-relatorio-06-1.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.sbtnews.com.br/noticia/governo/211836-bolsonaro-mobilizacao-do-sete-de-setembro-apoiara-um-certo-candidato>

## Conclusion

Almost two years after armed insurrectionists stormed the US Capitol, fired up by rampant online disinformation, we are seeing history repeat itself in Brazil. Now, as then, Meta is ignoring the warning signs that its systems are fueling the growth of an extremist, anti-democratic movement. And now, as then, it has failed to take effective action to counter it.

With tens of thousands expected to join anti-democracy marches in Brazil on September 7th, and Bolsonaro and his allies stoking support for an armed coup online, it is clear we are now at a crunch point. From the sample of posts and ads analyzed in this report alone, we can see that Meta is continuing to allow the spread of election disinformation and posts echoing the far right's call for an armed uprising, and failing to adhere to the basics of Brazilian electoral law. In short, Meta is failing to live up to its promises of protecting electoral integrity in Brazil.

To change course and prevent a repeat of January 6 in Brazil and beyond, Meta must urgently follow the [recommendations of 90+ Brazilian and international civil society organizations](#), including SumOfUs, by:

- Beefing up its content moderation systems, including by hiring more content moderators with sufficient understanding of the local political context; and providing them with fair pay and decent working conditions;
- Improving its ad account verification process so as to more effectively filter out accounts posting content that undermines the integrity of elections;
- Assessing, mitigating and publishing the risks posed by their platforms to human rights in the countries in which they operate;
- Publishing details of the steps they've taken in each country and in each language to ensure election integrity;
- Increasing transparency by listing full details of all ads in the Meta ad library, including intended target audience, actual audience, ad spend and ad buyer;
- Allowing verified independent third party auditors to check whether the company is doing what it is saying, and to ensure it can be held accountable;
- Publishing its pre-election risk assessment for Brazil;
- Responding to the 90+ Brazilian civil society organizations' policy recommendations in their report [The Role Of Digital Platforms In Protecting Electoral Integrity In The 2022 Brazilian Election](#).

Furthermore, Meta must immediately deploy a policy to fact check political ads; and we invite the Electoral Tribunal to assess the candidates and profiles exposed in this report, and apply the relevant legislation to demand their removal when in breach of the electoral legislation.

## Methodology

This research work and monitoring was conducted during the period of August 20th to 26th 2022.

Using Meta's ads library we identified eight popular hashtags and their variations related to September 7th, Independence Day in Brazil: #7deSetembro; #DiadaIndependência; #VaiSerGigante; #STFRompeuDemocacia; #JairouJaEra; #EuAutorizo; #VerdeAmarelo; #SemanadaPátria.<sup>36</sup>

Researchers then identified those ads that were clearly election-focused and reduced the sample to 2,821 ads. All of these ads were published by just 19 different accounts, most of them candidates and politicians (including left-leaning actors).

36 Free translation in English: #7September; #IndependenceDay; #WillBeGigantic; #SupremeCourtBrokeDemocracy; #JairOrDone; #IAuthorize; #GreenYellow; #NationWeek

From this sample, we analyzed 36 problematic ads – 16 ads related to the antidemocratic rallies on Independence Day; 10 electoral ads were before the permitted election campaign period and another 10 ads contained political attacks, fake news and hate speech.

With the help of analyzing tools such as Crowd Tangle, we identified relevant actors, hashtags (the 8 listed above) and WhatsApp and Telegram posts that are referenced in this report.

We manually monitored three WhatsApp groups, which included 593 different accounts in total. We received at least a thousand messages a day in total from these groups. In Telegram we've been monitoring the five biggest public groups that support President Bolsonaro. The biggest and most active one has more than 62,000 members, sending up to 5,000 messages a day. All five deliver at least 15,000 messages per day.

To corroborate our main findings, we cross checked our own research and observation results with previous published research, for example by UFMG and InternetLab/UFBA as well as UFSC messaging apps monitoring studies. We also checked public databases like the Superior Electoral Court's database, as well as dozens of media articles published by credible Brazilian and international media outlets.

## Annex - Further content collected during the research period

### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=592534492283101>

This early electoral campaign that ran on Aug 4th, which includes the image of an MP candidate, reached over **5,000 impressions**.

**Sobre o anúncio**

Vereador Meche  
Patrocinado • Pago por Claudia Laurindo Ouedes  
Identificação: 592534492283101

Quem defende bandido é cúmplice da roubalheira.

**Lula é a segunda maior vergonha do Brasil, a primeira é quem ainda defende esse bandido.**

**Marchelo Meche**  
Candidato Cidadão

Vereador Meche

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
4 de Ago de 2022 a 4 de Ago de 2022  
Identificação: 592534492283101

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio. **Ver mais**

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
>1 mi pessoas

**Valor gasto**  
O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. **Saiba mais**

**Valor gasto**  
<R\$100 (BRL)

**Impressões**  
O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. **Saiba mais**

**Impressões**  
4 mil a 5 mil

Image Translation: "Lula is the second biggest embarrassment of this country, the first is whoever still defends this thug. Marchelo Mesche, MP candidate."

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=767579607611256>

Another MP candidate using Bolsonaro's image and the rallies to promote his candidacy before the legal electoral period. The ad reached around **10,000 impressions** and ran for nearly a month, from July 10th - Aug 8th.

**Sobre o anúncio**

Direita DF  
Patrocinado • Pago por Eric Zander  
Identificação: 767579607611256

NASCIDO E CRIADO EM BRAZILÂNDIA, ERIC ZANDER É O CRIADOR E ADMINISTRADOR DO PERFIL DIREITA DF E É PRÉ CANDIDATO A DEPUTADO DISTRITAL A JUDE E FORTALECER A DIREITA NO DISTRITO FEDERAL, SUA O NOSSO PERFIL.

**BRAZILÂNDIA COM BOLSONARO**

**QUEM É ERIC ZANDER?**

INSTAGRAM COM SUA O NOSSO PERFIL. NASCIDO E CRIADO EM BRAZILÂNDIA, ERIC... **Learn More**

INSTAGRAM COM SUA O NOSSO PERFIL. NASCIDO E CRIADO EM BRAZILÂNDIA, ERIC... **Learn More**

NASCIDO E CRIADO EM BRAZILÂNDIA, ERIC... **Learn More**

NASCIDO E CRIADO EM BRAZILÂNDIA, ERIC... **Learn More**

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
10 de Jul de 2022 a 8 de Ago de 2022  
Identificação: 767579607611256

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio. **Ver mais**

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
10 mil a 50 mil pessoas

**Valor gasto**  
O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. **Saiba mais**

**Valor gasto**  
R\$100 a R\$199 (BRL)

**Impressões**  
O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. **Saiba mais**

**Impressões**  
9 mil a 10 mil

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=771534397221882>

An ad depicting three candidates, replicated at least four times, calling for the rallies on Sept. 7th. Combined, they gathered around **17,000 impressions**.

**Sobre o anúncio**

Vereador Meche  
Patrocinado • Pago por Claudia Laurindo Ouedes  
Identificação: 771534397221882

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
2 de Ago de 2022 a 2 de Ago de 2022  
Identificação: 771534397221882

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio. **Ver mais**

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
>1 mi pessoas

**Valor gasto**  
O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. **Saiba mais**

**Valor gasto**  
<R\$100 (BRL)

**Impressões**  
O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. **Saiba mais**

**Impressões**  
4 mil a 5 mil

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1187607698681808>

Another ad from the same Bolsonaro ally, MP **Sargento Floriano**. Here, he promotes homophobic speech with Meta's help. He used a news link about the "LightYear" Pixar/Disney film being banned in 14 countries because a homosexual kiss to attack the LGTB+ community. "The left wants to destroy the traditional family, and it's not a plan only in Brazil. Defending family and Cristian values never have been so necessary", he says. It reached **2,000 impressions**.

**Sobre o anúncio**

Sargento Floriano  
Patrocinado • Pago por Rubiel Platone  
Identificação: 1187607698681808

A esquerda quer destruir a infância, e isso é um plano que não se limita ao Brasil.

Catorze países acertadamente vetaram a exibição desse absurdo!

Defender a família e os valores cristãos nunca foi tão necessário!

**Cena de beijo lésbico faz 'Lightyear' ser vetado em 14 países**

**Dados por trás do anúncio**

Inativo  
17 de Jun de 2022 a 18 de Jun de 2022  
Identificação: 1187607698681808

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
O tamanho estimado do público faz uma previsão de quantas pessoas atendem aos critérios de direcionamento e posicionamento de anúncio que os anunciantes selecionam quando criam um anúncio. **Ver mais**

**Tamanho estimado do público**  
100 mil a 500 mil pessoas

**Valor gasto**  
O valor total estimado que você gastou em um anúncio durante sua programação. **Saiba mais**

**Valor gasto**  
<R\$100 (BRL)

**Impressões**  
O número de vezes que um anúncio apareceu em uma tela. Pode incluir várias visualizações pelas mesmas pessoas. **Saiba mais**

**Impressões**  
1 mil a 2 mil

**Para quem esse anúncio foi mostrado**  
O estabelecimento por onde o anúncio foi mostrado.

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=567009741585919>

A [far-right Congressman](#) and evangelical minister, publishes a video promoting hate speech against the feminist movement, saying that he teaches how to get the feminists irritated. He also says that president Bolsonaro's wife, Michele Bolsonaro, represents the Brazilian women and not the country's feminists, who only bring shame to the country. The ad has had around **20,000 impressions**.

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1289361181468029>

This ad was created by Bolsonaro's own political party and published twice by Meta, reaching **2,000 impressions**. The text asks people to join the march to show support for Bolsonaro.

Image Translation: 'Here comes the biggest Sept. 7th of our History!'

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=568198445011821>

This anticipated electoral campaign ad was posted by an ex-president Lula [political ally](#) at least three times. The post shows support for Lula's candidacy. Running between 7th and 10th August, combined, they gained around **8,000 impressions**.

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=3575314139362124>

This ad calling for support for Bolsonaro at Sept. 7th rallies gained between **25,000 and 30,000 impressions** and was funded by a [State MP candidate](#).

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=285411530430478>

In this example, the [MP Davi Monteiro](#) attacks former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva based on a statement by him a few days earlier that he was in favor of regulating abortion in the country. 'Remember that Christians do not defend abortion. The defense of life, for me, is a non-negotiable value.' The ad had **2,000 impressions**.

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=827829978381447>

This ad had between **3,000 and 4,000 impressions**.

Translation: "INVITATION Hello friends, Hope you and your family are well. What's at stake is our country, our families and our citizenship. DAY 09/07 Come everybody to the streets at Rio das Ostras [RJ], Cannot be big Has to be gigantic"

<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=570734714559727>

This ad [made by an MP](#) calls on followers to join an electoral support WhatsApp group, and gained **60,000 impressions**.

## WhatsApp

Translation: "We are ready for war! To overthrow the president they will have to overthrow the people! #Tiedwithbolsonaro"

Translation: "This is our only target! The Communism Military intervention with Bolsonaro in power now!"



For more information on  
our work, please contact  
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