

Jair Bolsonaro: The war in Ukraine as a pretext to violate the Constitution?



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The president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, uses the war in Ukraine to implement an old plan: legalize mining in indigenous territory. According to him, it is necessary to reduce the shortage of fertilizers.

If it were up to the president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, the Brazilian Congress would urgently approve a law that would authorize mining on "indigenous lands." The granting of licenses to extract raw materials would be drastically simplified. Until now, each authorization required an individual resolution of Congress.

"Mining in areas designated as indigenous was already on President Bolsonaro's agenda during the electoral campaign," recalls Ricardo Barros, leader of the ruling parties in the House of Representatives. Barros began the fast-track procedure for the approval of the bill in the lower house of Congress.

Bolsonaro declared that the war in Ukraine is the reason for carrying out an urgent procedure. Russia and its ally Belarus are among the largest exporters of potassium, one of the most important components of fertilizers.

Russia stopped exporting potassium in early March. World market prices for products with potassium have doubled since mid-2021. Brazil is the largest importer of fertilizers in the world, and its largest suppliers are precisely Russia and Belarus.

The potassium shortage is not an invention of the Brazilian president. In an extreme case, it could limit the productivity of Brazilian agriculture, endangering not only the food

security of Brazilians, but also with global effects: Brazil is one of the largest food producers in the world.

However, critics do see an excuse: "Changing the law to extract raw materials for fertilizer production in these areas is not a solution. It will not solve the fertilizer crisis, but will create huge social and environmental problems," he tweeted. Raoni Rajão, a data scientist at the University of Minas Gerais, who evaluated data from two agencies of the Brazilian Ministry of Mines on potassium deposits in the country.

Rajão and his co-author, Bruno Manzolli, conclude that only 11 percent of registered potassium deposits are in territories claimed by indigenous peoples. The search for more deposits is not urgent either, since the already known deposits of raw material could, according to the researchers, cover Brazil's potassium needs for the rest of the century.

However, it may be a few years before Brazil is able to obtain significant amounts of the mineral. For this reason, the advisory agency of the Ministry of Agriculture (Embrapa) wants to launch a campaign, in March, to teach farmers to use fertilizers more efficiently. Through this program, the authorities expect a saving of 20 percent of the volume of fertilizers used. It is estimated that, with this measure, producers could save one billion US dollars.

Environmentalists fear that while the proposed law would have little impact on Brazil's fertilizer supply, the consequences for indigenous peoples and the Brazilian rainforest could be devastating, especially in the Amazon rainforest, where gold and iron are mined.

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