

Brazil judge orders probe of Musk over censorship charge

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Elon Musk, owner of social media platform X, faces an investigation by Brazilian authorities over accusing a judge of censorship for blocking certain social media accounts suspected of spreading disinformation.

A Supreme Court judge in Brazil ordered an investigation Sunday of Elon Musk after the mogul criticized the magistrate and accused him of

ensorship for blocking social media accounts suspected of spreading disinformation.

In an order seen by AFP, Judge Alexandre de Moraes accused the owner of X of "criminal instrumentalization" of the platform.

The judge said "the social network X must refrain from disobeying judicial orders, including by reactivating an account that the Supreme Court ordered blocked." Moraes threatened to punish the world's richest person with a fine equivalent to about \$20,000 for each reactivated account.

In recent years Moraes has ordered the suspension of Twitter accounts suspected of spreading disinformation.

"Social networks are not lands without laws," the judge wrote in capital letters in his order.

Beginning Saturday evening, Musk took to X, the platform formerly known as Twitter which he purchased in 2022, to launch a series of attacks against Moraes.

"This [judge](#) has brazenly and repeatedly betrayed the constitution and people of Brazil. He should resign or be impeached," the Tesla and SpaceX boss posted.

As a result of Moraes threatening to impose massive fines and "cut off access" to the platform, "we will probably lose all revenue in Brazil and have to shut down our office there," Musk posted.

"But principles matter more than profit," he said.

A divisive judicial figure—tyrannical to some and a fervent defender of

democracy to others—Moraes is one of the 11 members on Brazil's high court. He also presides over the country's Superior Electoral Tribunal, or TSE.

Critics, now including Musk, have said Moraes is part of a sweeping crackdown against free speech in Brazil.

Moraes has spearheaded the battle against disinformation in South America's largest nation. In recent years he has ordered the blocking of accounts of influential figures on social networks, most of them supporters of Jair Bolsonaro.

The far-right former president in 2023 was declared ineligible to run for office by the Moraes-led TSE, for disseminating [false information](#) about Brazil's electoral system.

Bolsonaro is also being investigated over an attempted coup to prevent his 2022 electoral defeat against the current leftist president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, after a crowd of Bolsonaro supporters stormed the headquarters of the country's three branches of power in Brasilia.

Shortly after Musk's first attacks on Moraes, Brazil's Attorney General Jorge Messias called for "urgent regulation of social networks."

"We cannot live in a society where billionaires who live abroad control social networks and show themselves willing to violate the rule of law, disobeying judicial orders and threatening our authorities," he said on X, without mentioning Musk by name.

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