

In Brazil, Demonstrators Demand Public Services and an End to Rampant Corruption.
President Dilma Rousseff is Embarrassed



Brazilian police had to restrain demonstrators who threatened to disrupt the Confederations Cup soccer tournament yesterday even after President Dilma Rousseff urged protesters to abandon violence and welcome foreign squads gearing up for next year's World Cup.

More than 100,000 marched in cities throughout Brazil yesterday as protests demanding improved public services and less government corruption entered a third week. The biggest demonstration was in Belo Horizonte, where television images showed protesters clashing with police near the stadium where [Mexico's](#) national team beat [Japan](#). Tens of thousands more demonstrated in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and the southern city of Santa Maria. Police estimate over 5,000 protested in [Salvador](#), where Brazil defeated [Italy](#).

The demonstrations were smaller than on previous occasions

and some of the first to occur after the president in a nationally televised address vowed to improve social services while urging Brazilians to help her host a “great” World Cup. Government financing for new stadiums has become a symbol of misplaced state spending for protesters who demand better health care, education and public transport.

President Dilma Rousseff “ignored what the protests were about,” Rogerio Redondo, a 58-year-old engineer, said at a march along one of Sao Paulo’s main avenues yesterday. “She was too concerned about justifying the World Cup when she could have announced an effort to investigate whether there’s been corruption. She missed out on a big opportunity.”

Protests Started

Protests started June 6 when students in Sao Paulo marched against a 7 percent increase in bus fares. The demonstrations have ballooned, peaking on June 20 as nearly one million marched throughout [Brazil](#), according to estimates by newspaper Folha de S.Paulo. A teenager was killed during the demonstrations and a 54-year-old street cleaner died the next day after having a heart attack during protests.

In her first public appearance in three days, Rousseff on June 21 responded to the unrest by offering to spend oil royalties on education while bringing more doctors into the country to improve health care. A former Marxist guerrilla once imprisoned by the country’s 1964-1985 military dictatorship, Rousseff vowed to meet with protesters and urged Brazilians to act peacefully. “I have both the obligation to hear the voice of the streets and to dialog with all segments within the confines of law and order,” said Rousseff, 65. “If we let violence take us off our path, we will not only be wasting a big historic opportunity, but also will be running the risk of losing a lot.”

Faster Inflation

While 40 million Brazilians emerged from poverty in the past decade, faster inflation has reduced purchasing power and slowed growth. The world's second-biggest emerging market in 2012 posted its second-worst economic performance in 13 years while [inflation](#) this month breached the 6.5 percent upper limit of the government target range.

Protesters this weekend fielded a range of grievances, from teachers marching for better pay to gay rights activists opposing a bill to let psychologists recommend medical treatment for homosexuality. Protesters in Rio de Janeiro lined up hundreds of soccer balls on the beach to represent the country's murder victims.

Demonstrators June 21 blocked the highway to Sao Paulo's international airport, while 30,000 took to the streets of the city yesterday to demand an end to government corruption, according to Folha newspaper. Local police reported no major incidents in Salvador, where the mood at the stadium turned festive after Brazil won 4-2. Tens of thousands marched in the southern city of Santa Maria while protesters camped out in front of Governor Sergio Cabral's house in Rio, according to Globo television.

Istanbul Protests

Unrest in Brazil echoed TV images of police using water cannons to disperse thousands gathered at Istanbul's Taksim square for a memorial service to those killed in three weeks of demonstrations against the government. Protests also spread to [Paraguay](#), where about 3,000 gathered in the capital of Asuncion June 21 to denounce corruption, according to Globo.

Fabio Okuda, 29, was among thousands who gathered on one of Sao Paulo's main boulevards, Avenida Paulista, to protest a

range of issues yesterday, including a proposal in Congress that would block prosecutors from investigating crimes.

Protesters with yellow-and-green Brazilian flags draped over their shoulders jumped up and down chanting “The people have awakened,” as protesters tried to lure shop owners to join the protest. One protester’s sign read: “In congress and in the senate, filth everywhere.”

‘Same Discourse’

“Dilma didn’t say anything last night, it’s the same discourse as always,” said Okuda, an administrator at an import company. Amid the unrest in Brazil Sepp Blatter, head of soccer’s governing body FIFA, departed the South American nation, surprising Brazilian officials who had expected him to remain for the length of the two-week Confederations Cup. FIFA said Blatter will return to Brazil June 26 for the semi-finals.

The tournament so far provides a contrast to Rousseff’s ambition of hosting a competition that she said in a speech last month would allow Brazil to “shine” on and off the pitch as a “joyful” and “peaceful” country.

Many protesters are critical of plans to spend 30 billion [reais](#) (\$13 billion) to host the World Cup in a country where health care is lacking and education infrastructure is crumbling. Brazil has 1.8 doctors on average per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 3.2 in Argentina, while in Brasilia, more than 80 percent of public schools have inadequate facilities such as leaky roofs, according to a watchdog organization known as the Federal District Court of Auditors.

Brasilia Stadium

Meanwhile the stadium in Brasilia is forecast to cost 14,300 reais per seat, compared with 10,000 reais per seat for the Cape Town arena, the costliest of the 2010 World Cup. Costs for the

arenas more than tripled since Brazil's proposal to FIFA in 2007, according to a Senate report.

Rousseff has defended the spending, saying it will improve public infrastructure and the investments will stimulate economic growth. She called on Brazilians to reciprocate the kind of hospitality the national squad for decades received abroad in the World Cup.

"We can't live with this violence that embarrasses Brazil," she said.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-06-23/brazilians-clash-outside-stadium-as-rousseff-pleads-peace.html>

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