**Brazil Impeachment: The Process for Removing the President**

By THE NEW YORK TIMES UPDATED April 17, 2016

Dilma Rousseff, the beleaguered president of Brazil, has been confronting an effort to remove her from office, accused of violating fiscal laws by using funds from state banks to cover budget shortfalls.

Her opponents claim this strategy eroded confidence among investors, raising the government’s borrowing costs and disregarding measures designed to prevent a return of high inflation.

The president’s supporters contend that Ms. Rousseff was seeking to maintain popular antipoverty projects, and that impeachment over the issue is politically motivated because Ms. Rousseff’s predecessors carried out similar policies.

Here is a guide to the complicated process for impeaching and removing a president from office:



Eduardo Cunha, president of the Chamber of Deputies. Credit Ueslei Marcelino/Reuters

*Step 1: Congressional Panel Debates Charges*

The process prescribed in Brazil’s Constitution, adopted in 1988, shares similarities with impeachment proceedings in the United States.

First, the speaker of the lower chamber of Congress, Eduardo Cunha, a political opponent of Ms. Rousseff who himself [faces bribery charges](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/17/world/americas/corruption-scandals-in-brazil-reach-all-the-way-to-the-top.html), had to accept a petition for impeachment.

Mr. Cunha then formed a 65-member congressional committee to investigate the accusations and decide if removal was warranted. The political composition of the committee was largely stacked against the president.

The committee was created in December, but its work was soon stopped by a court order. Work resumed in March.

Jovair Arantes, the legislator in charge of preparing the committee report on the fate of Ms. Rousseff and an ally of Mr. Cunha, recommended on April 6 that proceedings move forward to remove her from office.

The full committee, in a 38-27 vote on April 11, agreed, clearing the way for a vote on her impeachment in Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies.

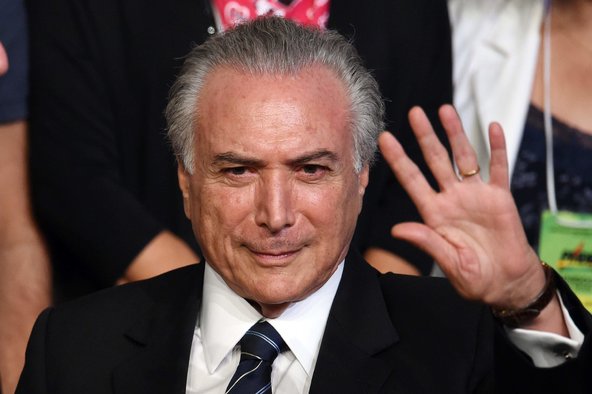
*Step 2: Chamber of Deputies Votes*

On April 17, the lower chamber voted for impeachment. At least two-thirds of the 513 deputies had to vote for impeachment for the motion to pass. The decisive 342nd vote was cast about five-and-a-half hours after the floor vote started.

The matter now goes before the Senate, which will decide, with a simple majority vote, whether to put Ms. Rousseff on trial.

But first, Ms. Rousseff could appeal the lower house’s vote to Brazil’s high court, the Supreme Federal Tribunal, and the Senate would have to await a ruling before voting on whether to begin her trial.

“She can appeal at any moment she finds something legally questionable occurring in the process,” said Brasílio Sallum Jr., a professor of sociology at the University of São Paulo and an expert in Brazil’s political processes.



Michel Temer, Brazil's vice president, would assume power during any impeachment trial. Credit Evaristo Sa/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

*Step 3: Trial Begins, Vice President Assumes Power*

If such a Senate trial begins, the president would be suspended and the vice president would take over, with the authority to appoint ministers and enact policy.

[Michel Temer](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/08/world/americas/vice-president-of-brazil-emerges-from-shadows-as-scandal-engulfs-dilma-rousseff.html), the vice president, is a member of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party. His party was a crucial part of Ms. Rousseff’s governing coalition, but it recently [voted to split](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/30/world/americas/dilma-rousseff-brazil-governing-coalition.html) with her Workers’ Party, increasing the odds of impeachment.

Mr. Temer, 75, is himself [under scrutiny](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/17/world/americas/corruption-scandals-in-brazil-reach-all-the-way-to-the-top.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FRousseff%2C%20Dilma&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=10&pgtype=collection) over claims that he was involved in an illegal ethanol purchasing scheme.

On April 5, a justice on the Supreme Federal Tribunal ruled that the lower chamber [must consider a petition to impeach Mr. Temer](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/06/world/americas/brazil-impeach-ruling-michel-temer-dilma-rousseff.html). The petition accuses Mr. Temer of the same fiscal crimes for which Ms. Rousseff faces impeachment.

*Step 4: Removal or Reinstatement*

The Senate trial would be overseen by the chief justice of the Supreme Federal Tribunal, Ricardo Lewandowski.

Two-thirds of the 81 senators must vote in favor of removing the president from office. If no decision is reached within 180 days, the suspension of the president ends.

Asked in [a recent interview](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/world/americas/dilma-rousseff-president-of-brazil-resists-calls-for-her-resignation.html) with The New York Times whether she would accept a vote to impeach her, Ms. Rousseff, 68, said, “We will appeal with every legal method available.”