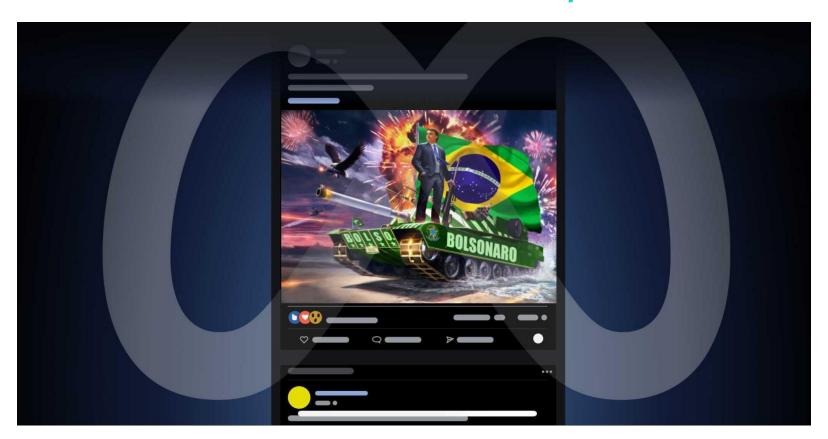


# **URGENT REPORT**

# How Meta and Google enabled and profited from the terrorist attacks in Brazil's capital





## Introduction

After a historically turbulent election period in 2022, Brazil seemed to finally be back to normal once the newly elected President, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, took office in an emotional ceremony on January 1st 2023. However, it didn't last long. After just one week, a mob of violent Bolsonaro supporters invaded the premises of the country's key democratic institutions — in the heart of its capital, Brasília, leaving behind nothing but destruction.

Just like the January 6th US Capitol insurrection, social media platforms facilitated these attacks. As our previous 3 reports document, social media platforms allowed extremist content to be widely shared for months ahead of Brazil's capital invasion, and they also actively recommended and directed users to pro-coup content, including explicit calls for violence.<sup>1</sup>

On YouTube, several extremist influencers livestreamed the attack from inside government premises for hours, showing and sensationalizing the destruction of the premises of three Brazilian institutions, the pillar of the country's democratic system (Supreme Court, Presidential Palace and National Congress), without any consequences from the platforms. Our latest research shows that one profile livestreamed for almost four hours and gathered an audience of a million views in less than 24 hours. Another far-right demonstrator transmitted his livestream for more than five hours and had more than 600,000 views in less than 24 hours.

These videos were then spread widely across Meta's platforms, as well as Twitter, TikTok and Telegram. None of the videos were taken down during the entire duration of the invasion.

Platforms only began taking down content after Supreme Court minister, Alexandre de Moraes, <u>issued a judicial order</u> for the removal of extremist content in relation to the far-right invasion.

<sup>1</sup> SumOfUs previous reports: <u>Stop The Steal 2.0</u>: <u>How Meta is Subverting Brazilian Democracy</u>, Sept 2022; <u>Stop The Steal Part 2</u>: <u>How Youtube and Meta are Dismantling Brazilian Democracy</u>, Oct 2022; <u>Stop The Steal 2.0</u>: <u>How Meta and Tiktok are Promoting a Coup</u>, Oct 2022.



The platform's response was dangerously slow. A wide array of extremist content glorifying and inciting further riots was still available on most of the social media platforms 24 hours after the government buildings were retaken by security forces.

This violent and unprecedented attack on Brazilian democracy follows months of warnings from tech and human rights campaigners that social media platforms were being used to grow a violent, anti-democratic movement in the run-up to the Brazilian election. Social media platforms were continuously warned that failure to take action could lead to the kind of violent uprising seen on the US Capitol on January 6th 2021. Successive SumOfUs investigations, detailed how the companies' own tools and algorithms were directly aiding those seeking to build support for a pro-Bolsonaro coup, including by directing users to content raising doubt about the integrity of the election. Key findings from our previous investigations between September-December 2022 include<sup>2</sup>:

- On TikTok, five out of eight of the top search results for the keyword "ballots" were for terms such as "rigged ballots" and "ballots being manipulated";
- Facebook and Instagram directed thousands of users who entered basic search terms about the election to groups challenging the integrity of the vote;
- Facebook was actively approving harmful ads that sowed doubt in the election results, including ads that specifically called for a military coup. These problematic ads racked up 615,000 impressions;
- YouTube allowed Bolsonaro's Stop the Steal narrative to go viral on its platform, with videos promoting this conspiracy theory gaining more than 22 million views, and 2.3 million Facebook interactions.

In an effort to deep-dive into Brazil's far-right capital invasion we undertook new research to understand what was going on inside the platforms themselves and where things went wrong. The main findings include:

- Google and Meta let extremists livestream during the riot, inciting more people to join the attacks;
- Some extremist influencers were calling for the coup attempt and invasions with live and recorded videos, posts, and messages several days before the invasion. The videos were still online at least 24 hours after the events;

3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See previous footnote for links and references.



- Some livestreams were broadcasted for over 4 hours and gathered millions of live views without being restrained in any form by Google;
- Google, as well as far-right influencers, profited from all the mayhem going on in Brasília, as ads were running freely on their channels and videos;
- Even after a judicial decision demanding platforms take down extremist content glorifying or calling for more riots, military pro-coup messaging, videos and photos can still be found on the platforms;
- Military pro-coup content calling for more riots around the country is still being widely shared over social media in Brazil.

## Methodology

SumOfUs researchers monitored the social media landscape between January 8th and 9th, specifically on YouTube, TikTok, Telegram and Facebook.

During the attacks, researchers analyzed five livestreams broadcast by far-right YouTubers taking part directly in the riots. At least one of them used their personal Facebook page to livestream the events. Two of these videos were still available online on Monday afternoon, January 9th, 24 hours after the events, and more than 12 hours after a Supreme Court minister, Alexandre de Moraes' judicial order for platforms to take this kind of material down.

Using the CrowdTangle search engine tool and specific hashtags related to the invasions, our researchers tracked a sample of posts to monitor their outreach across different social media platforms.

During the writing of this report, Google, Meta and other platforms began to take down some of the content highlighted in the report. Our researchers downloaded and saved many of the live videos that were taken down.



## **Livestreams Across Platforms**

### **CHANNEL: Política Sem Curva**

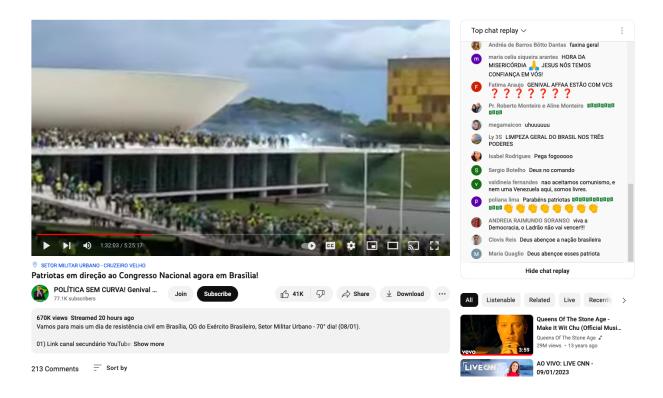
Link: https://www.youtube.com/@genivalfagundes - taken down on January 9th

This channel, with 77,000 subscribers, is operated by the extremist influencer Genival Fagundes and is one of several people who livestreamed the riots on YouTube.

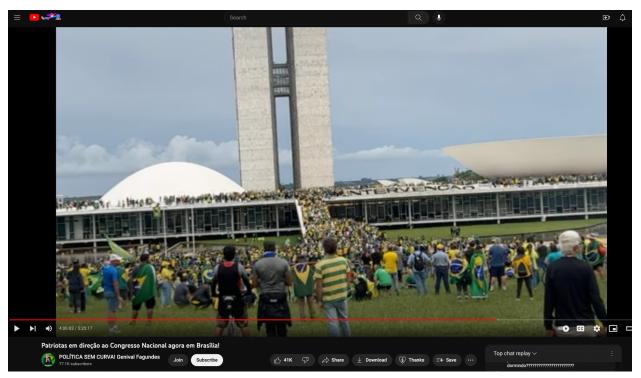




Genival livestreamed the riot for more than five hours nonstop. He started his livestream at the beginning of the demonstration and ended it when the rioters were being pushed back by police and forced away from the palaces. <u>It gathered 670,000 views</u> in less than 24 hours.

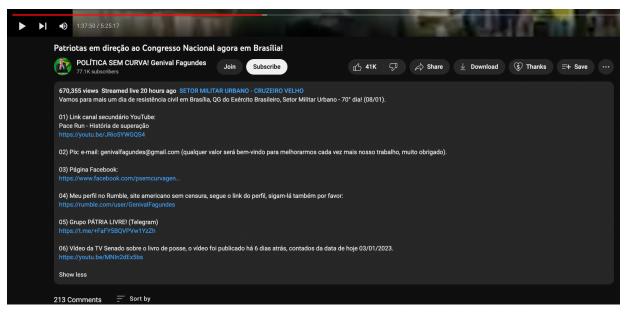






Screenshots of the livestream of the invasion

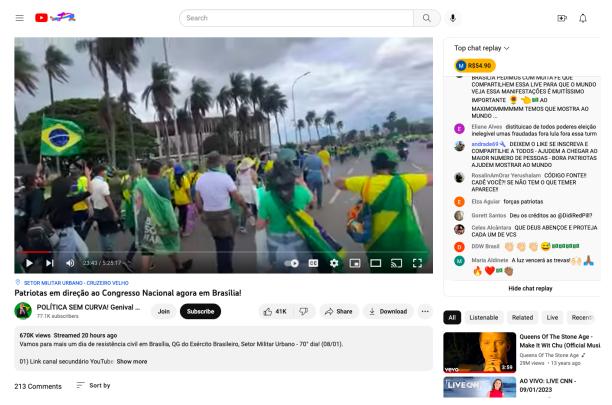




Screenshot of the description of the video, where the influencer details a second YouTube channel, Facebook profile, Telegram group, email and bank details for donations

During the video, Genival Fagundes claims that people have lost their patience and are taking the power back. Immediately after the destruction starts, he says in the video, "Is it vandalism when the people take back their own home? Of course not". Several times in the livestream he urges for more people to join them in seizing power, and cheers and interviews others participating in the invasion along the way. The livestream continues with him taking part in the invasion of at least one public building, the National Congress, which was completely destroyed by the mob alongside the Supreme Court and the presidential palace.





Screenshot of the livestream showing the start of the march.

The video has also been partially livestreamed on Genival Fagundes's <u>Facebook page</u>, which until the publication of this research, still remains online (see below).

When he and others began invading the first of the government buildings Genival makes reference that his livestream could be taken down at any moment. He says, "It will be taken down any minute now, let's enjoy it while we can! Come!", right before invading the Congress via the roof. However, he was able to livestream the entire invasion with no action from the platform.



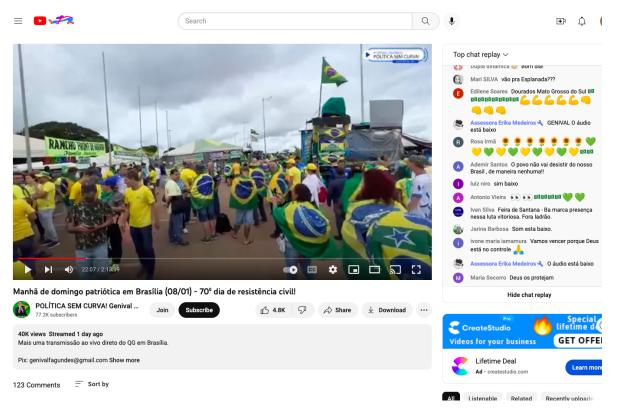
During the invasion, our researcher opened their personal YouTube page, and was actively recommended one of the riot livestreams on his channel, <u>specifically the video below</u>, on their home page. The researcher has never seen or searched for this channel before.



Screenshot of the livestream video recommended by YouTube. The livestream was depicting the joy of far-right demonstrators when more buses arrived at the riots

<u>In another livestream</u> he covered preparations from inside the far-right camps and the arrival of demonstrators. On Sunday morning, his livestream was more than 2 hours long and had 40,000 views.



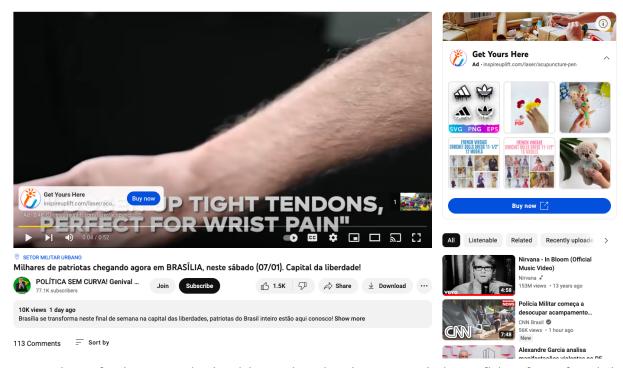


Screenshot of the livestream showing the far-right camp in Brasília the day before the invasion

After the riot, he was livestreaming once again, this time showing the destruction of a far-right camp where he was staying, in front of Brazilian Army headquarters, with 3,345 real time viewers.

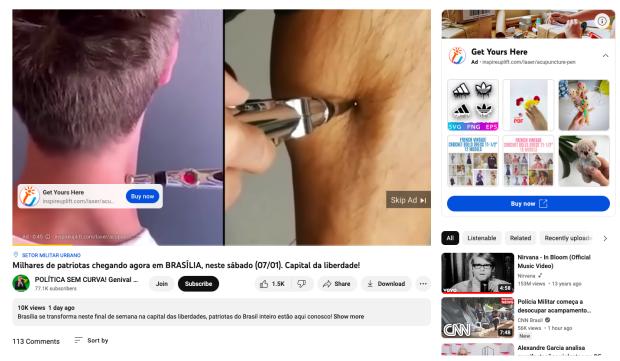
Beyond having an open platform to broadcast real-world political violence, his channel is monetized with ads by YouTube, which means that both he and Google made money off this extreme content. This is hardly a surprise, as SumOfUs' previous reports have shown this pattern in Brazil and elsewhere.





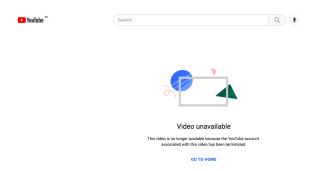
Screenshot of ads on Genival's videos, showing how Google is profiting from far-right channels





Screenshot of several ads on Genival's videos, showing how Google is profiting from far-right channels.





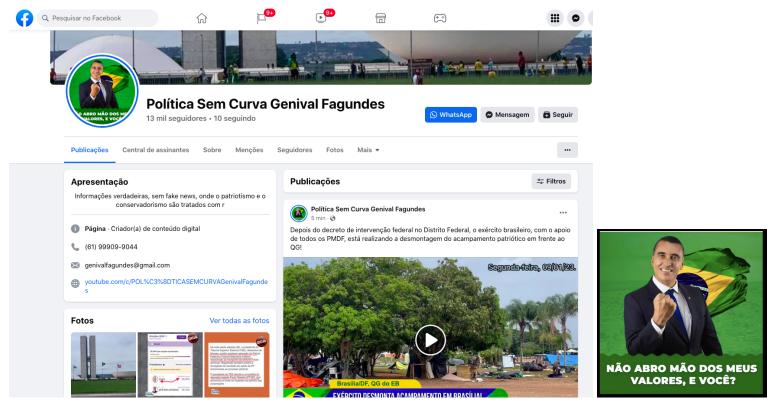
Only on Tuesday, January 10th, two days after the coup attempt in Brazil, did SumOfUs researchers find his channel blocked.

As is common for influencers, far-right or not, Fagundes operates on an integrated cross-platform. He posts his content and videos on several social media platforms, feeding and retro feeding one another.

Genival's Facebook Profile link: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/psemcurvagenivalfagundes?mibextid=LQQJ4d">https://www.facebook.com/psemcurvagenivalfagundes?mibextid=LQQJ4d</a>

His Facebook page, with 13,000 followers, was still up by the time this report was written.





Screenshot of Genival's Facebook profile containing most of the videos he livestreamed on his YouTube channel.

Genival also operates a Telegram group, with another 330 very active members that post at least a thousand messages per day, as well as a Twitter profile.

Link to Genival's Telegram group: Viver a Pátria Livre!



#### https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpv0DNE5nBE



In this video shared on Telegram, Genival explains he created a third YouTube profile to escape the bans.



Screenshots of the Telegram group and its Admins.

Genival's twitter account, with 330 followers, was deleted at some point on January 9th.



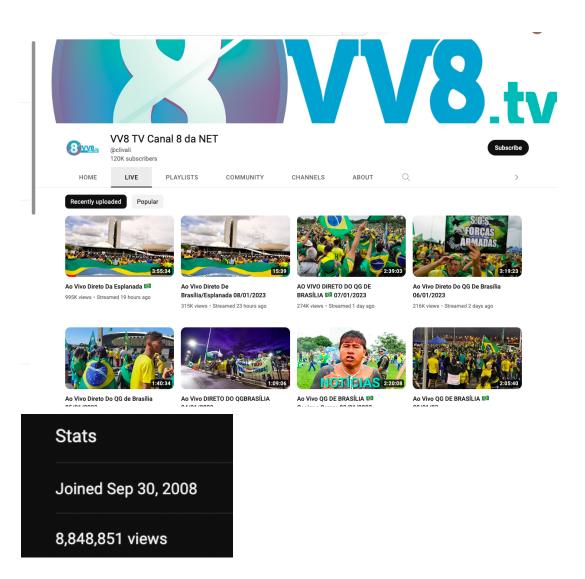


#### **CHANNEL: VV8.TV**

LINK: https://www.youtube.com/@clivali - still online

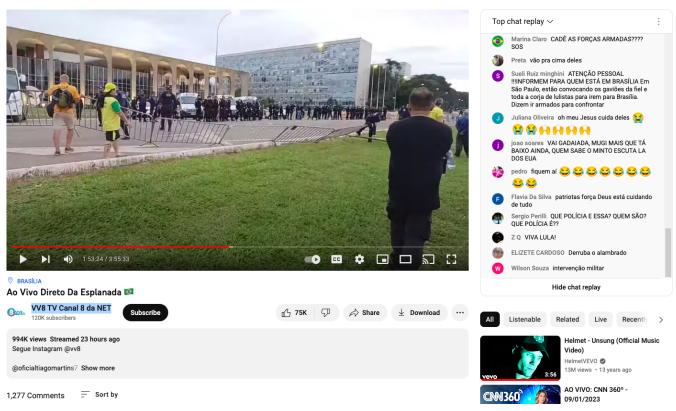
This channel has 120,000 subscribers and operates as a <u>cable TV channel</u>. Not only did the channel livestream the invasion, but the hosts took active part in it, including livestreaming the far-right camp for weeks before the invasion took place. The channel has gathered nearly 9 million views since its creation in 2008.





Before being taken down by <u>YouTube</u> at some point on January 9th, **the livestream racked up almost a million views**.

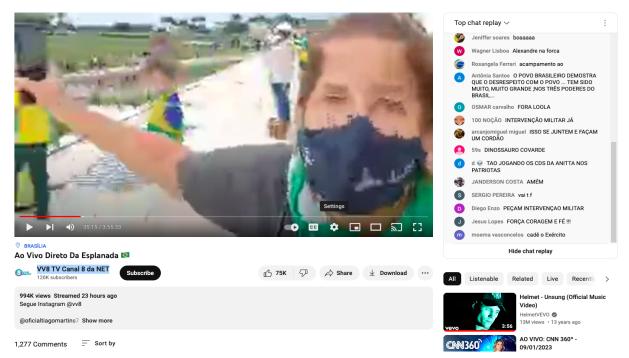




Screenshot of VV8 TV's livestream of the invasion. In the description of the video they added an <u>Instagram profile</u> and bank details for donation

The streamer for the channel was live for almost 4 hours during the riot and took part in the destruction and invasions, as his own images show.



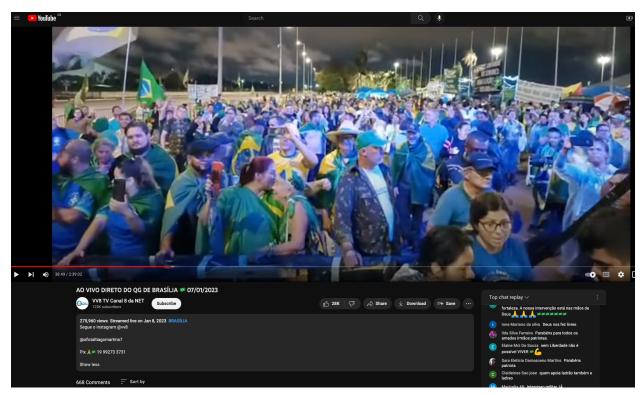


Screenshot of the livestream with the host taking active participation in the invasion

He gathered **994,000 views with this livestream**, which was still online and available on Youtube until at least 3:45 pm Monday, January 9th. During this livestream, he urges more people to come join them during the invasions.

Below is a series of examples from previous livestreams from Brasília calling for a coup.

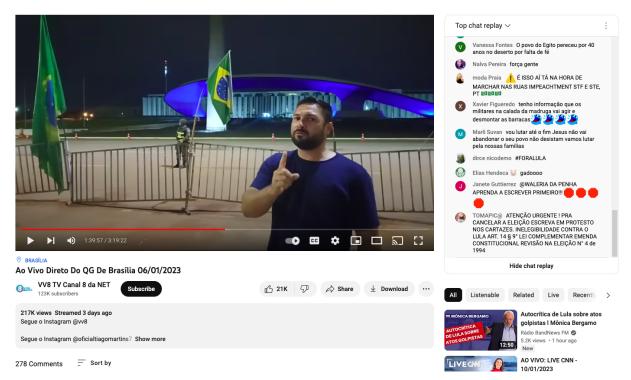




Screenshot <u>of the video</u> showing the far-right extremists getting ready for the invasion the night before in Brasília, which ranked up 276,000 views

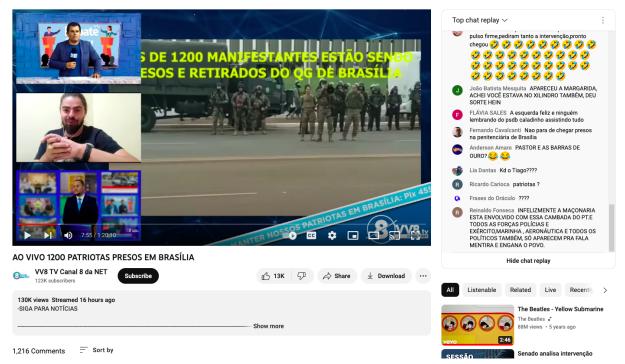
The channel has been livestreaming from the **far-right camp in Brasília for over 25 days**, as they claim in one of the videos. They also openly asked for donations for the channel. In previous videos **they've continuously been calling for a coup.** After the Sunday rally they also called for the release of the thousands of people arrested, saying Lula's dictatorship had started. Many of their videos have hundreds of thousands of views, and the videos were still online by the time this report was finished.





Screenshot of a video where the hosts claim the extremists in the military camp were chosen by God and thanks the immense viewership in their channel. This video racked up 276,000 views

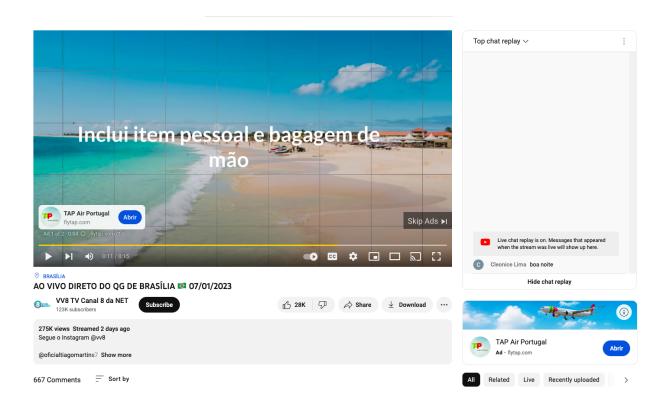




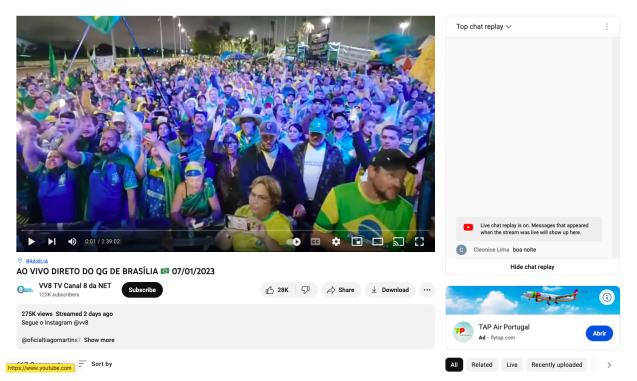
Screenshot of <u>one video</u> where they ask for the liberation of the far-right demonstrators arrested during the invasion which received 130,000 views

As the screenshots below show, the **channel is monetized**, proving how Google and the influencers have been profiting off of pro-coup narratives for months.





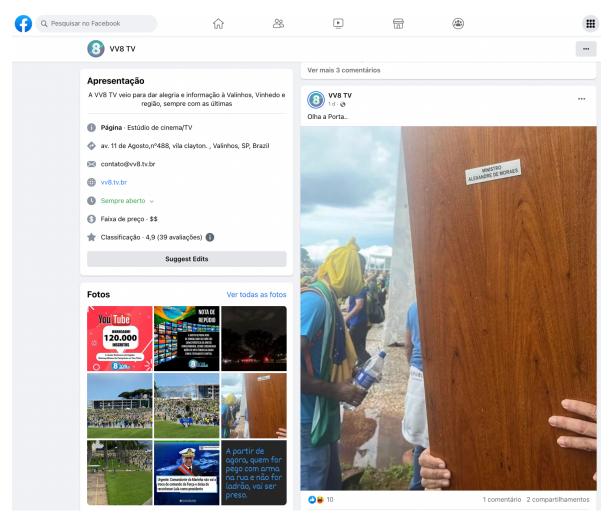




Screenshot of a video with 275,000 views with an TAP airlines Ad

The channel also has an active <u>Facebook profile</u>, with 17,000 followers, where they also shared live content during the invasion.

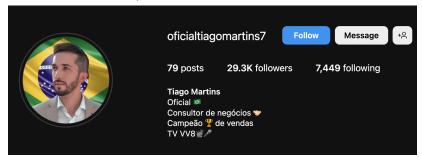




Screenshot of their Facebook page during the Supreme Court invasion. The door being held in the picture is from the Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes' office, a long standing enemy of the far-right



The YouTube videos in the channel all had this <u>Instagram account</u> in their description. The profile has over 29,000 followers. The profile is public, and contains several posts calling for a military coup. The account was still online when this research was published.



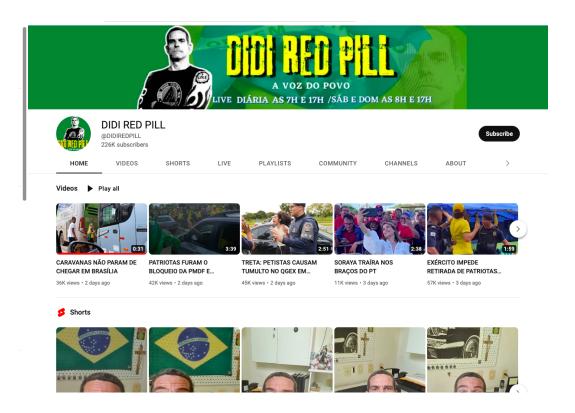


Screenshot of one video of the far-right camp where the TV host stayed for weeks. Amongst the content, he openly asks for donations and a military coup

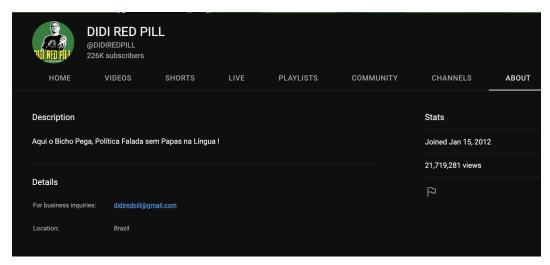


#### **CHANNEL: DIDI Red Pill**

LINK: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@DIDIREDPILL">https://www.youtube.com/@DIDIREDPILL</a> - still online



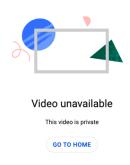




Screenshots of the channel, which is still active on YouTube. In total, the channel has had over 21 million views since its creation in 2012

<u>This extremist influencer</u> became famous after being a participant of the first Big Brother Brazil reality show, more than 20 years ago. Nowadays, he spreads far-right ideas across his social media platforms and runs a YouTube channel with 226,000 subscribers. By Tuesday afternoon, January 10th, his channel was still up.



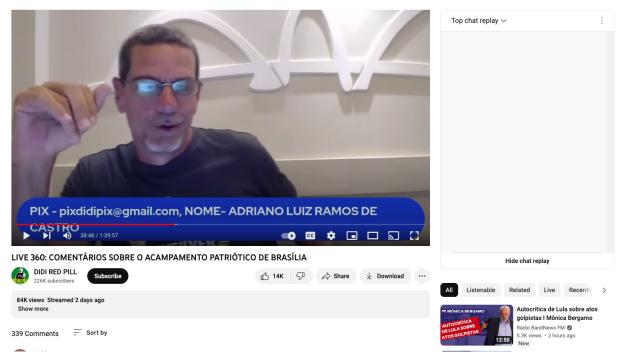


He <u>removed</u> the <u>live video</u> of the invasion before our researchers could save it. However, the former reality TV participant filmed a mob pushing past a police line protecting Brazil's Congress, and then into the building itself.

He was streaming live from the middle of the riot for more than four hours, with an audience of hundreds of thousands, as our researchers monitored on Sunday afternoon.

The previous night, <u>he livestreamed</u> from the hotel he was staying at in Brasília to almost 100,000 viewers. He says that the police wouldn't stop the march, and people should join them without fear.





Screenshot of the video where he openly asks people to join the invasion and asks for donations, gathered over 84,000 views, and it's still online

On the same afternoon, he was also <u>livestreaming</u> the preparations for the invasion.





Screenshot of a video exalting the buses arriving in Brasília for the invasion

Since the riot, he hasn't uploaded any new videos.

<u>DidiRedPill</u> also has a Twitter account, which since the invasion has been made private.





#### **CHANNEL: Andreia Luíza Matias**

LINK: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@andreialuizamatias4787/streams">https://www.youtube.com/@andreialuizamatias4787/streams</a> - still online

This smaller far-right influencer, has 51,000 subscribers on YouTube and racked up nearly 3 million views on her channel since it was created in 2021.

## SumOfUs<sup>7</sup>







#### Andreia Luíza Matias

@andreialuizamatias4787 50.7K subscribers VIDEOS



SHORTS

PLAYLISTS COMMUNITY CHANNELS

ABOUT





EXÉRCITO EVACUA O QG: MANIFESTANTES SEM DESTINO...

3.2K watching



LIVE

BRASÍLIA AGORA: POVO TOMA O CONGRESSO E SEGUE PARA O... 88K views • Streamed 17 hours ago



BRASÍLIA HOJE! IMPEACHMENT DE MORAES E A MINISTRA MILICIANA 27K views • Streamed 2 days ago



FLÁVIO DINO AMEAÇA POLICIAIS: VÃO TER DE PRENDER INOCENTES 20K views • Streamed 4 days ago



CIDADÃO DESARMADO: ARMAS SÓ



DE VOLTA À CENA DO CRIME: ÓDIO

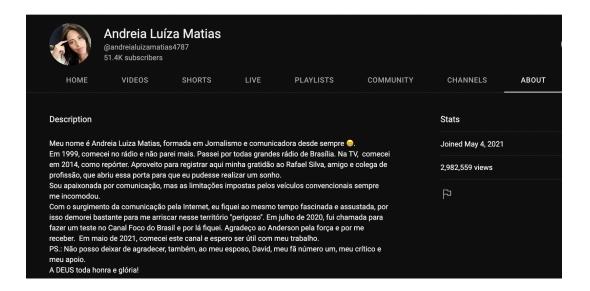


A MENSAGEM DO PRESIDENTE:



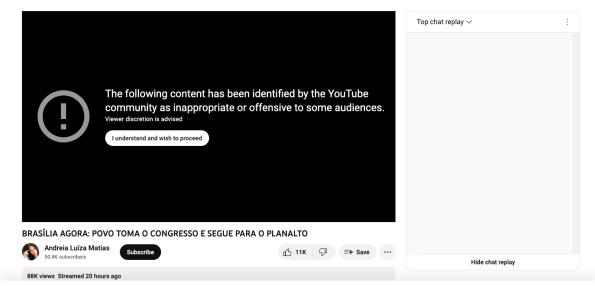
MILITARES PROTEGEM





She also livestreamed the invasion, but <u>the video</u> had been taken down at some point on January 9th. Her two hour long livestream was aired during the riots with her comments about the invasion in the video description. It was taken down by YouTube only after the livestream was already finished on Sunday with 88,000 views.

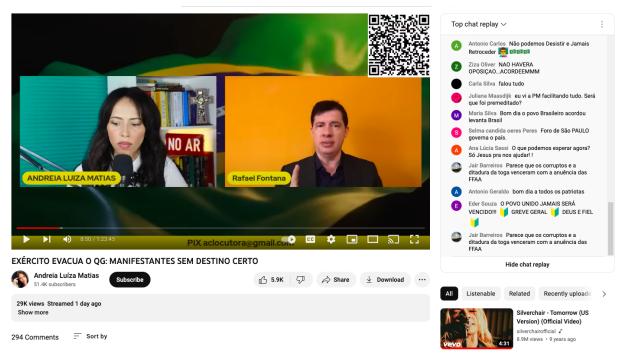




Screenshot of Andreia Luíza Matias's livestream of the invasion of the Congress that ranked up over 88,000 views, currently down

Despite this video being taken down by YouTube, she continued to livestream about the invasion.

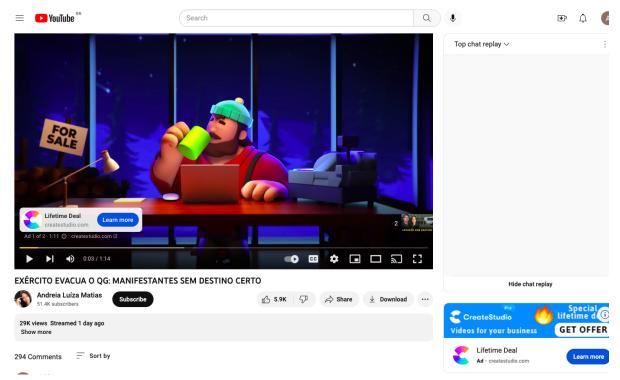




Screenshot of the video interviewing a fellow far-right extremist calling for a military coup ranked up 29,000 views

The following day, she was live again, interviewing another extremist, and telling the audience to not lose faith after the coup failure. The video racked up 29,000 views. As shown below, her channel is also monetized with advertisements by YouTube.

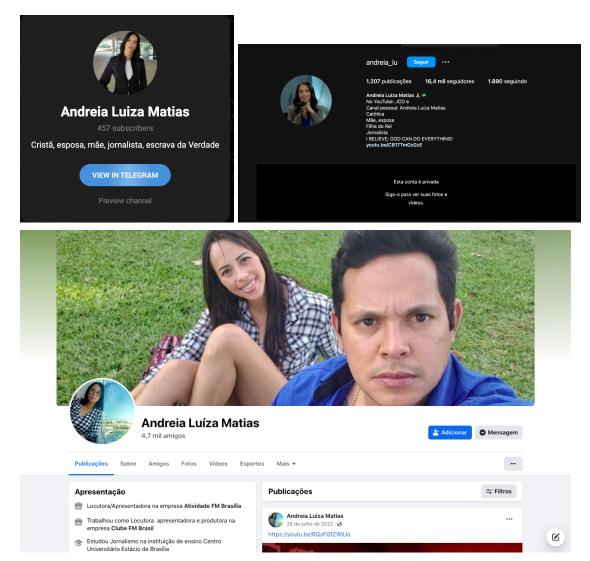




Example of Andreia Luíza Matias's channel being monetized

Despite having her <u>Twitter account</u> suspended, her personal <u>Facebook profile is still active</u>, as is her <u>Instagram</u> and <u>Telegram</u> accounts.





Screenshots of Matias's several social media profiles

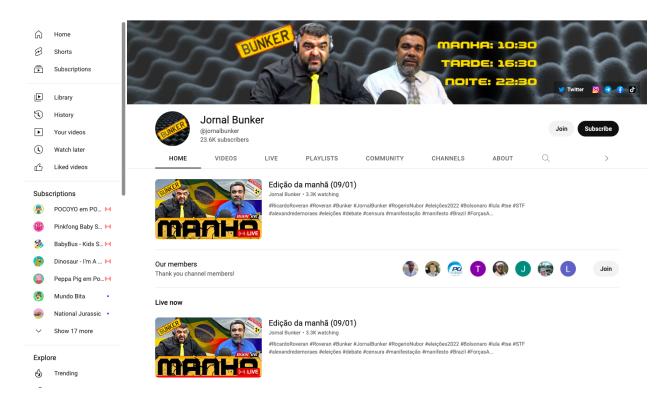
Her personal Facebook account is also filled with political hate speech.



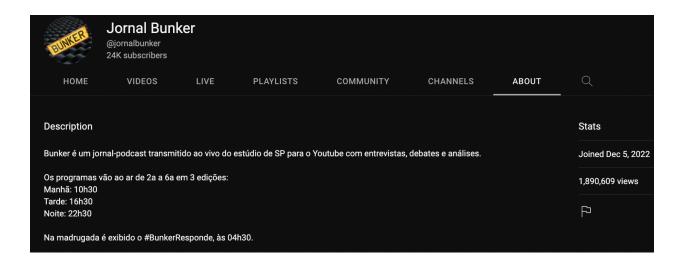
#### **CHANNEL: Jornal do Bunker**

LINK: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@jornalbunker">https://www.youtube.com/@jornalbunker</a> - still online

Created about 30 days ago, this channel already has 23,600 subscribers and racked up nearly 2 million views.

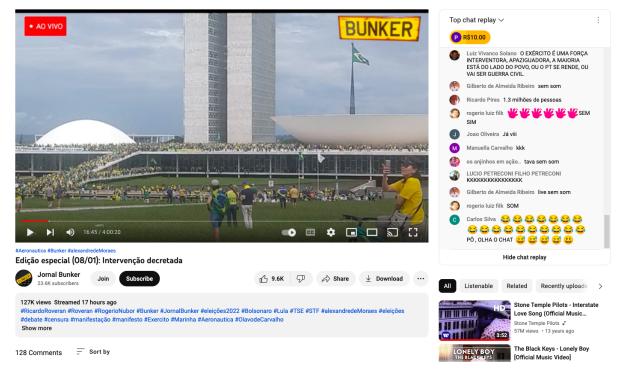






This <u>livestream</u> is partially from the riot and partially from a studio where the host, Nubor Rogério, a podcaster, took over the show. This livestream got 127,000 views in less than 24 hours and was still available on the afternoon of Tuesday, January 10th.



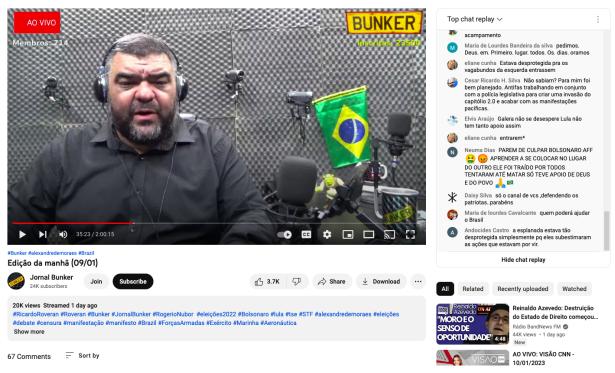


Screenshot of the livestream video whilst the host take active part of the attacks

While commenting on the invasion, Nubor Rogério denies that the invaders are extremists and radical Bolsonarists. "They are Brazilians! The press is treating them like criminals, they are just patriots that had enough!", he says.

The next day, Monday, January 9th, he was back livestreaming, making calls for another military coup and riots.

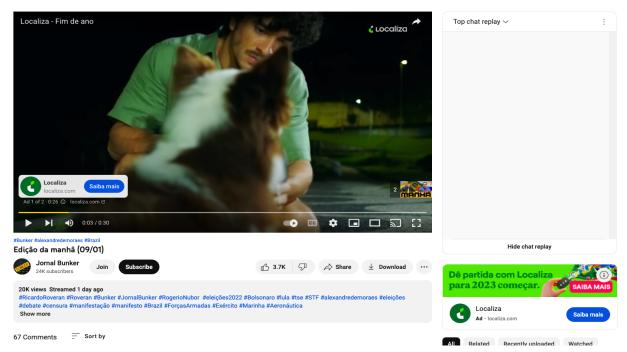




Screenshot of the video where the host incites a military coup

The Jornal do Bunker is also monetized by YouTube.





Screenshot showing the monetization of the channel, with an ad for the massive Brazilian rental agency Localiza.

The channel also <u>has its own Facebook page</u>, which is still active. The page promotes the YouTube channel and shares extremist content.





Screenshot of Bunker's Facebook profile

The host, Nubor Rogério, is also present across platforms. Below, his own <u>Facebook profile</u> which is still active and where he promotes his channel.





Screenshot of Nubor's Facebook profile, actively promoting the YouTube channel

The host also uses his <u>Twitter account</u> which is still active to promote his YouTube channel, and violent content calling for a military coup.









Screenshot of Nubor's Twitter post depicting those invading congress and asking for a recall of the general election





Screenshot Nubor's <u>Twitter post depicting</u> the invasions, where he writes, "the people invaded the National Congress! The people don't accept a thief as their president, elected by the Electoral Tribunal! The people won't accept communism!"

# Far-Right Content Across Social Media Platforms

TikTok, Meta and Telegram: At the service of the far-right

Before, during, and even after the Brazil capital invasions took place and a <u>Supreme Court order</u> was issued demanding the removal of far-right content, <u>it was and is still possible</u> to find a wide array of extremist content all over social media and messaging apps, related to the military pro-coup far-right movement.

Our researchers pulled some examples across TikTok, Telegram, Facebook and Twitter:



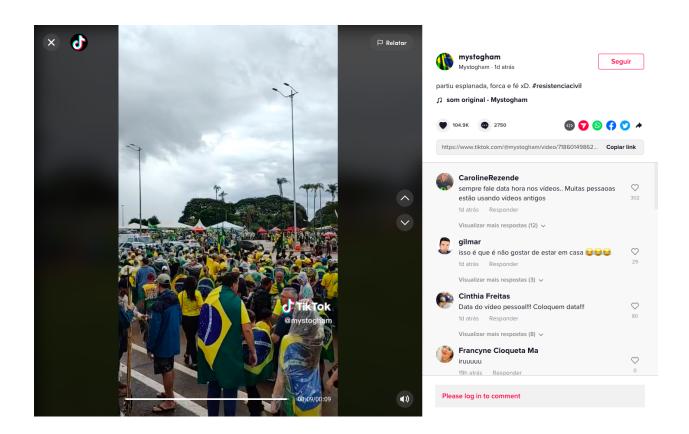
- On Facebook, just two posts racked up more than 499K views and 69K likes and had 9.5K comments;
- On **TikTok 4 videos** amassed more than **3 million views**;
- On **Instagram two videos** amassed more than **71K likes** and thousands of comments celebrating the attacks.
- **Telegram** was **flooded** with content and commentary around joining, planning, attending, and celebrating the invasion. Just **three highly engaged messages** amassed more than **138K views**.

#### **TikTok**

**1.5 million views** - this video is from a far-right demonstrator participating in the invasion, and shows the preparation before the attacks. It was taken down at some point on January 10. The description reads "time to go to *esplanada* (the square invaded), strength and faith, #civilresistence". Link:

https://www.tiktok.com/@mystogham/video/7186014986245065989?is\_copy\_url=1&is\_from\_webapp=v1&q=Esplanada% 20&t=1673294354261

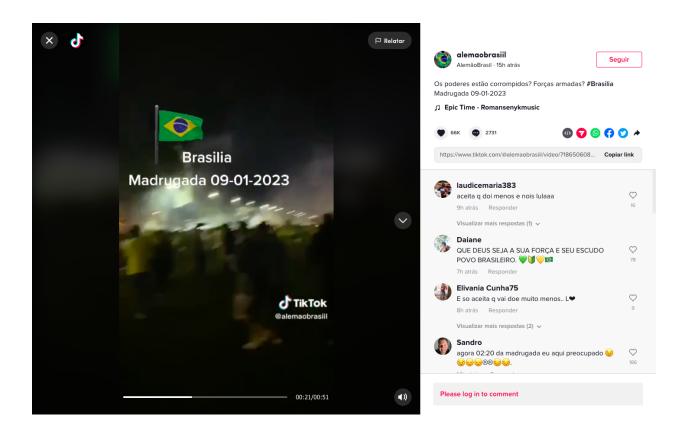




**1.2 million views** - this video had been removed at some point on January 10th, and it called for a military coup. (removed at some point on January 11th).

Link: https://www.tiktok.com/search?q=bras%C3%ADlia&t=1673294037345

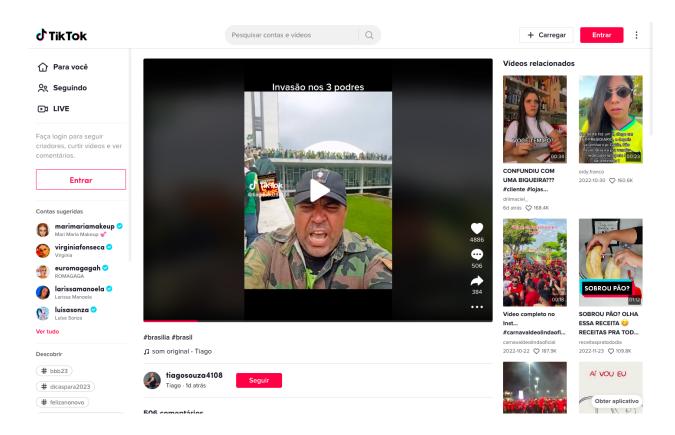




**Over 240,000 views** - this video was filmed by one of the far-right demonstrators while invading the Congress. It was taken down at some point on January 10th.

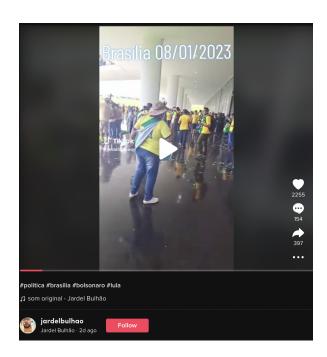
https://www.tiktok.com/@tiagosouza4108/video/7186408277620575494?is\_copy\_url=1&is\_from\_webapp=v1&q=bras%C3 %ADlia&t=1673294037345





**120,000 views** - In this other livestream video, the person recording celebrates the invasion of the Senate. Link: <a href="https://www.tiktok.com/@jardelbulhao/video/7186376243254725893?is\_copy\_url=1&is\_from\_webapp=vl">https://www.tiktok.com/@jardelbulhao/video/7186376243254725893?is\_copy\_url=1&is\_from\_webapp=vl</a>





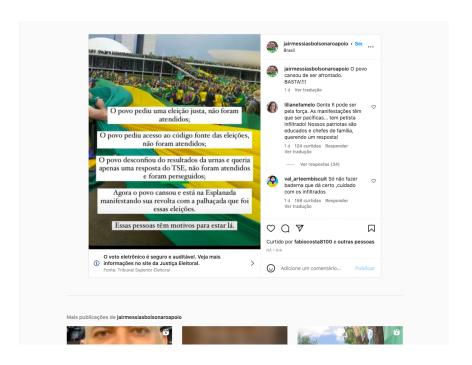
# Instagram

This post, with **35,800 likes and 2,700 comments**, is a profile in support of Bolsonaro. The text says that the invasion of Brasília was the last possible resort of the people after a fraudulent election.

Link: <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CnKxV8aJlzL/">https://www.instagram.com/p/CnKxV8aJlzL/</a>







This other post celebrating the invasion gathered **240,300 views, 35,200 likes and 2,800 comments** according to Crowdtangle. It reads "URGENT! Brazilians are on the streets and took control of the national Congress". This post had been removed at some point on January 11th.

Link: https://www.instagram.com/p/CnKh9BYpmFB/



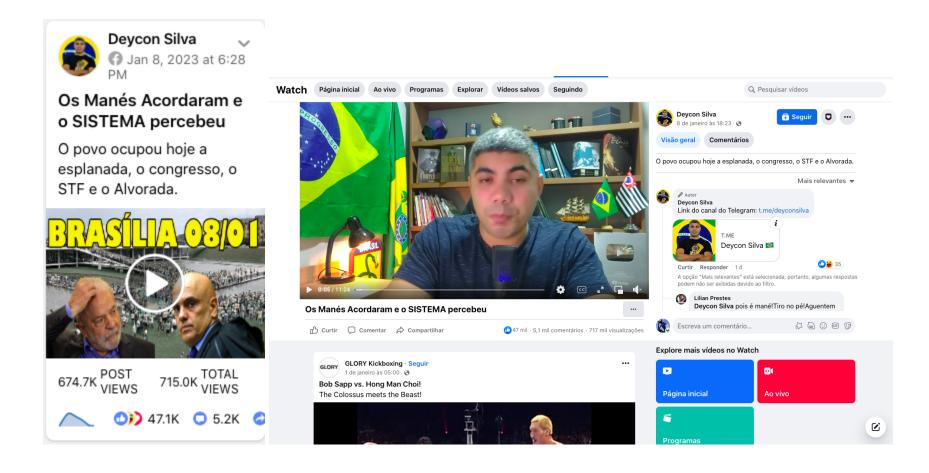


#### **Facebook**

This post below, from the <u>profile page</u> 'Deycon Silva', still active, has over **150,000 followers**. This post also celebrates the invasion and has racked up **715,000 views, 47,100 likes and 5,200 comments** according to Crowdtangle. It reads "we, the 'dumb' woke up and the system is now aware. The people occupied the *esplanada*, congress, supreme court and *Alvorada* palace."

Link: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=929337618432211

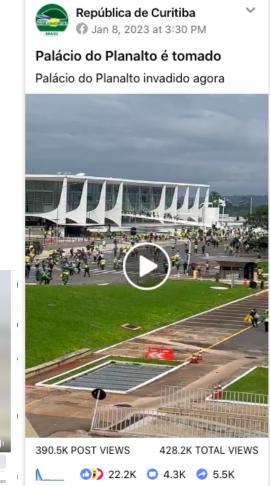




<u>This Facebook page</u>, still online, in support of a military coup, has over **1,5 million followers**. They shared a post celebrating the invasion and gathered **428,200 views, 22,200 likes, 4,300 comments and 5,500 shares** according to Crowdtangle.

Link: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5819493961474733

### SumOfUs<sup>7</sup>







### **Telegram**

Telegram has thousands of channels used to mobilize the far-right in Brazil. For the purpose of this research, we sampled content from two specific channels in order to highlight the widespread pro-coup content being shared on the platform. The admins actively called on people to join the coup while the events were taking place.

Because the most egregious examples on Telegram were either videos or audio files, a wider sample can be found on this WeTransfer link.

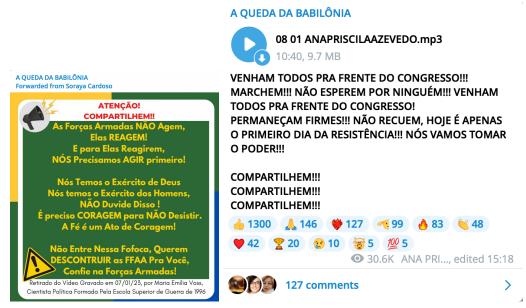
The two channels we sampled are:

- 1) A QUEDA DA BABILÔNIA ('the Babylon fall'), with nearly 31,000 subscribers.
- 2) 'Verde Oliva' ('green olive', in reference to the military uniform colors), with over 10,000 subscribers.



Below, a small sample of posts inciting violence, military coup, and celebrating the attacks in Brasília shared in these groups:





Screenshot of posts calling for people to join the violent invasion ahead of January 8th and asking for a military coup. The second sample had over 30,000 views

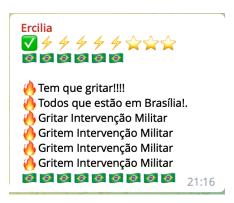




A QUEDA DA BABILÔNIA

Screenshots of posts that were shared during the invasion. Both celebrated the attacks as a military coup is the only alternative. In total, they gathered over 72,000 views





Screenshot shared thousands of times with the words "It's time to scream! Everybody in Brasília say: Military Intervention Military Intervention [...]"



Screenshot of posts on Telegram groups. The first with over 36,000 views and thousands of engagements, is a crude



depiction of the Supreme Court Justice, Alexandre de Moraes. The second, shared widely across groups, is passing orders to "Camp inside the Congress, Presidential Palace and Supreme Court".

# Conclusion

It was reasonable to expect that Big Tech had learned something after the Christchurch massacre – which was livestreamed by a terrorist on Facebook – and several other tragic events, including the US Capitol insurrection on January 6th 2021. Instead, both Meta, via Facebook and Instagram, and Google via YouTube facilitated the livestreaming of the unspeakable violence against Brazil's key democratic pillars.

As this research and several others have shown, platforms are defiant even in face of judicial orders. Meta and Google announced one day after Brazil's invasion that they would remove pro-coup content from their platforms, proving that they are technically able to take action to remove violent content. However, as researchers and whistleblowers have shown repeatedly, senior executives refuse to put in place high safety and security standards in order to shield their bottom line.

SumOfUs is calling for an immediate investigation by Brazilian authorities into the role of social media companies in Sunday's attacks in Brasília; the permanent ban of social media profiles inciting violence and spreading pro-coup content; and finally, the extradition of the several influencers who escaped to the US after being served arrest orders by Brazilian authorities and continue to still freely broadcast disinformation and pro-coup content to their followers.



For more information on our work, please contact corporate@sumofus.org

Link to SumOfUs previous researches on Brazil 2022 Presidential election:

- Stop the Steal 2.0: HOW META IS SUBVERTING BRAZILIAN DEMOCRACY, Sept 2022
- Stop the Steal Part 2: HOW YOUTUBE AND META ARE DISMANTLING BRAZILIAN DEMOCRACY, Oct 2022
- Stop the Steal 2.0: HOW META AND TIKTOK ARE PROMOTING A COUP, Oct 2022