

## São Paulo's Streets Echo Bolsonaro's Call Ahead of Municipal Elections

On 25 Feb 2024, São Paulo witnessed a massive mobilisation as over 185,000 people flooded Avenida Paulista in a show of support for Brazil's former president, Jair Bolsonaro. This gathering, reminiscent of the Jan 2023 unrest, underscores Bolsonaro's enduring influence as Brazil gears up for pivotal municipal elections across 5,500 municipalities later this year.

- **Echoes of Jan 2023 and Bolsonaro's Legal Challenges:** The significant turnout signals Bolsonaro's continued political sway, despite his disqualification from holding office until 2030 due to accusations of inciting unrest and challenging the 2022 election results. Bolsonaro's denial of coup attempts and insistence on peaceful protests contrast with the scrutiny he faces over his actions post-election defeat to Lula.
- **Symbolic Standoff in São Paulo:** The São Paulo protest served as a platform for Bolsonaro to voice opposition to President Lula, particularly highlighting support for Israel — a move aimed at galvanising his evangelical base. This strategic positioning presents a challenge for Lula, whose critical stance on Israel could influence public opinion and the upcoming municipal elections in Oct 2024.
- **Crucial Electoral Litmus Test:** The forthcoming elections will be a critical test for Lula's administration, with the handling of Bolsonaro's supporters, foreign policy stances, and military relations under intense scrutiny. Balancing responses to protests without appearing authoritarian is crucial for Lula, amidst regional concerns over democratic commitments in Latin America.
- **Navigating Brazil's Political Divide:** The persistent political divide, highlighted by Bolsonaro's active presence and the controversies surrounding Lula's policies, underscores the complexities of Brazil's political landscape ahead of the municipal elections.

Events like the São Paulo protest are not merely disruptions but carry broader implications for business continuity and risk management in Brazil. These protests reflect Brazil's deep political divisions and the challenges facing its leaders as the nation approaches crucial municipal elections. The ongoing political dynamics highlight the importance of strategic planning for businesses operating in or with ties to Brazil.