

Thousands march to denounce Brazil gov't

The Miami Herald
Aug. 04, 2007

SAO PAULO, Brazil --

Thousands of Brazilians marched in South America's biggest city on Saturday to denounce President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government as corrupt and indifferent.

Police estimated that about 3,000 demonstrators participated in the march down Sao Paulo's skyscraper-lined Avenida Paulista. Smaller demonstrations were staged in the capital of Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba.

Protesters, many dressed in black, sang Brazil's national anthem and carried posters demanding Silva's ouster.

"This is a nonpartisan protest against the corruption of the government," said organizer Obe Fainzilber.

Cabinet ministers and legislators in Silva's party have been caught up in a series of corruption scandals, but the still-popular president, who started a second term Jan. 1, has not been implicated.

Most recently, allegations have surfaced that Renan Calheiros, leader of the Senate and a close Silva ally, accepted payoffs from a construction company.

"Lula betrayed us," said Bethe Martinelli, a 44-year-old sales representative. "His government has been just as corrupt if not more than those that preceded him."

Many protesters were motivated by last month's crash of a TAM Linhas Aereas SA jetliner, which killed 199 people and stoked concerns about the nation's civil aviation system.

"It underscored the indifference that is this government's trademark," 43-year-old stockbroker Luiz Antonio Delgado said. "Indifference and incompetence in terms of public safety, education, housing, transportation and now air safety."