

# A GIANT AWAKES

## —Brazil

**Preface**

It began as a protest against a rise in bus fares but has transformed into a movement railing against corruption, poor public services and overspending on global sports events. Now the people of Brazil are making it clear that they won't go away until their voices are heard.

WRITER  
Sheena Rossiter

ILLUSTRATOR  
Álvaro Laura García



On 20 June last year a million Brazilians took to the streets of 388 cities across the country. It was said in that moment that the “giant had woken up”. Brazilians had had enough of the soaring costs to host events such as the 2014 football World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games – not to mention endemic corruption and poor public services.

What started as protests over a 20 centavo (6 cents) increase in bus fares in the city of São Paulo quickly spread and the protests haven't stopped since. Over the past year Brazilians have taken to the streets, the beaches and the shopping malls to protest everything from low salaries for public-school teachers to poor public health, education and the World Cup itself.

Although progressing with less momentum than a year ago, Brazil's protest movement remains alive. Here are some of the protesters exercising their right to protest in this young democracy. — (M)

**01**

Eron Moraes de Melo  
*Prosthetist*



De Melo hopes his Batman costume will inspire others to be strong and fight for change.

“I wanted to speak out, do something else, not just be a number among the protesters. Then last June I got a Facebook invite to a protest against the bus fare increases and when I saw the mayor's face [Eduardo Paes] painted as the joker, I decided to become Batman.

I already had a Batman costume. I use Batman as an inspiration, to inspire people to do even better than I'm doing. The idea is to call people to the streets to fight for their rights. That's my goal. And what [Rio's] Batman thinks is that education and healthcare are fundamental, because ill and unintelligent people don't have a bright future.

I'm a normal guy. The costume is different but I'm the same as anyone else. What I'm feeling is the same as everybody else. I'm telling you what people feel because I'm one of them. I'm not a leader. My inspiration is to help and encourage potential leaders.”

**02**

Angela Maria Tenório de Albuquerque  
*Former GP*



A corrupt public healthcare system means someone has to stand up for the patients.

“I have taken part in all of the demonstrations since I started to openly criticise Brazil's public healthcare system. All doctors who said something critical lost their jobs in the public system. I'm on the people's side. I'm fighting for them because we need our good hospitals back.

Brazil's public healthcare system is broken. We don't have hospitals any more. What we have are concentration camps. The patients are no longer patients. They have become victims. Usually when they go to hospital for help they end up dying there.

If the problem is corruption the way to solve it is to change the whole government. We have to kick them out of power. The large majority is corrupt. I don't have health insurance myself because the government should provide it to everybody.

Brazil has to wake up because we are facing a lot of problems. The chaos is everywhere.”

**03**

Marcela de Luna Souza Leite  
*Designer*



Leite has come up with inventive ways to spread the protest and speak for those who can't.

“Last June, the local news said that the protesters didn't really know what they were protesting against. After that I was talking with a friend of mine about an interactive-media projection that had been projected on Guanabara palace [the Rio de Janeiro governor's residence] and gone viral on the internet. We realised that it could be a creative way to protest and it wasn't easy to be incriminated.

We need to expose what people want to say since they want to do it but they don't have a way to do so. And the projection also communicates with people who are just walking by and it communicates with people who aren't taking part in the protest. They can understand what people are fighting against.

We are in contact with a group from New York called The Illuminator and we are planning to do a project during the 2014 World Cup to spread the protest abroad.”

**04**

Rafael Vilela  
*Co-creator of Midia Ninja*



Using non-traditional media, Vilela aims to offer a different perspective on the protests.

“We started about three years ago, documenting and communicating in a way that focused on social issues. Last year we officially opened Midia Ninja across Brazil because of the protests. We started to use the tools that we have, such as cameras and live streaming, and we started to put images up in real-time. We cover things that traditional media doesn't show and give a new point of view on stories that they do cover.

These protests started because the Brazilian people are unhappy and it can only be understood by seeing the general context. It's so many things all together. The big protests were well organised throughout Brazil via Facebook and everything exploded on the streets last June.

We understand this is a historical moment. It's fundamental for the country. When people take to the streets it reinforces the social movements that have been going on for many years here in Brazil.”

**Fearful Fifa**

Last year's Confederations Cup was Brazil's dress rehearsal for the World Cup. It was dominated by the demonstrations off the pitch rather than the football on it. It was not just the Brazilian government that was concerned by the protests – so too was football's governing body Fifa.

It won't be taking any chances this time. Special World Cup courts are under consideration, able to rush through cases far quicker than the normal process. Exclusion zones will be established around the stadiums. As Vanessa Barbara explains (see panel, right), the Brazilian government will take a similarly dim view of disorder.

All of which sits uncomfortably with Fifa's insistence that the World Cup is a celebration of all that is good in the world. Life, freedom, peace – you name it, Fifa boss Sepp Blatter believes football has the answer. Democracy, though: that's something world football doesn't do quite so well.

**Government forces**

**170,000** security personnel, including police, military and private security guards

**ESSAY**

**A FAREWELL TO DEMOCRACY**  
BY VANESSA BARBARA

‘Opposing forces’: how the Brazilian Defence Ministry describes the protesters

Brazil has been democratic for 29 years but the government risks losing everything the country has worked for if it resorts to draconian measures during the 2014 World Cup simply to placate Fifa.

It is said that although you might learn new moves and ways to behave, when the pressure comes you go back to your old habits. Maybe that's what we'll witness next month in Brazil during the World Cup.

Twenty-nine years ago Brazil became a democracy. Military dictatorship was finally gone, a new constitution was adopted and we elected a civilian leader for the first time in decades. Now we have a left-wing president, freedom of speech and a relatively critical press.

Last year our young democracy faced its first major test. Anger over rising bus fares and low-quality services led to mass demonstrations. The first reaction from the government was to send riot police to repress the people – as if it were the only option it knew. But when journalists were wounded, public opinion turned fiercely against the government. One million Brazilians took part in the protests across more than 100 cities and within a few weeks the government made concessions and transport fares were decreased.

More demonstrations are expected during the World Cup against excessive spending on stadiums, forced evictions, police violence, corruption and inequality. For the government, it might be tempting to re-enact old practices and create a state of emergency in a desperate bid to protect the tourists from scenes of violence and chaos – especially from protesters who are depicted in a recent manual from the Defence Ministry as “opposing forces”. The decision to rely on the army to ensure public security during the World Cup is particularly worrying.

Demonstrators have already been arrested under the old and disused National Security Law, a legacy from the military regime. Though some of them actually damaged banks, they were charged with terrorism rather than vandalism.

Congress is considering a new anti-terrorist law to arrest those who “cause or spread terror and panic”, a definition broad enough to incriminate everyone on the streets. In the democratic field we're on the verge of losing everything we've gained so far, just because Fifa has requested it. For a month this will be no country for its citizens – just for sports fans with a ticket.

Vanessa Barbara is a Brazilian journalist based in São Paulo. Read her weekly World Cup column for Monocle during the tournament at [monocle.com/worldcup](http://monocle.com/worldcup)

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