



COMITÊ BRASILEIRO DE DEFENSORAS E DEFENSORES DE DIREITOS HUMANOS

Open letter from the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders

Deaths announced in Brazil: 2017

Meeting between September 13 and 15, 2017 in Brasilia, during the event Fronteiras de Luta: Third National Seminar on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders, composed of organizations of civil society, leaders and social movements, warned the public about a serious scenario of increased violence and deaths announced, which affects the lives of those who defend human rights in Brazil.

The year 2017 began with the worsening of the situation of dismantling of public policies by the federal government and the approval of a set of laws that confirm the project of abandonment and violence in relation to the rights of the population. In view of this, 62 murders and countless reports of threats, attacks and intimidation against leaders and activists have been counted.

The Committee considers that the prior identification of these serious conflicts is extremely important and provides the possibility of effective intervention in order to avoid the escalation of violations of rights, such as murder and slaughter, such as the Pau D'Arco massacre (state of Pará), the slaughter of Colniza (Mato Grosso), the attack on the Gamela people (Maranhão) and the serious situation in the state of Rondônia.

In this sense, in order to prevent further deaths and massacres, the Committee and its social movements and organizations denounce situations of injustice and place themselves as allies in the mediation of conflicts, demanding that public authorities URGENTLY adopt effective measures for their resolutions, as well as guarantee the protection of human rights defenders and individuals in Brazil.

With great concern, we present below 15 death situations announced in the Brazil in 2017:

- **Mato Grosso.** *Settlement Raimundo Viera III (Lot 10) - Gleba Gama, located in the municipality of Nova Guarita. The community fears attacks and murders. After several threats and shots, a couple of settlers were tortured and kept in private jail.*
- **Para.** *Marabá. Encampment Hugo Chavez. Homeless families frightened by gunmen.*

- **Rondônia.** Municipalities of Ariquemes and Theobroma. Threat of eviction endangers the lives of the families of the Canaan occupation.
- **Maranhão.** Municipality of Viana. After an attack that left more than 20 injured, Gamela Indians suffer from gunshots, threats and are at risk of death.
- **Maranhão.** Municipality of Araisos - Baixo Parnaíba. Zé Menino's family, a fisherman killed in July this year, is at risk of death in the Croa Island Community.
- **Mato Grosso do Sul.** Guarani-Kaiowá Indians continue to suffer attacks and threats.
- **Bahia.** Serra do Padeir, municipality of Ilhéus. Cacique Babau and leaders of the Tupinambá indigenous people continue to be victims of assassination attempts and threats.
- **Bahia.** Municipality of Lençóis. After the massacre that decimated the lives of 6 young people, the Quilombola Community of Iúna continues to live with threats and risk of new attacks.
- **Bahia.** Quilombo Rio dos Macacos experiences beatings, torture and threats in the rural area of the municipalities of Salvador and Simões Filhos.
- **Amazon.** Massacre of isolated indigenous people known as Flecheiros, warning of extermination.
- **Amazon.** Manaus. Defender of the right to housing suffers death threats.
- **Minas Gerais.** Municipality of Almenara, Region of the Jequitinhonha Valley. After attacks on quilombolas, tensions in the Marobá dos Teixeira community increase.
- **Rio de Janeiro.** Human rights defenders who are militants of favela movements are victims of the security forces through kidnappings, attacks and intimidation.
- **Paraná.** Curitiba. Advocates of LGBTI rights are persecuted and threatened by fundamentalists and neo-Nazis.
- **Federal District.** Zilda Xavier settlement in Planaltina / DF. Coordinator of the right to housing movement is the victim of attempted murder and has its action restricted due to the continuity of the threats.

All of these cases are described in more detail below and were the object of various complaints filed with the competent public bodies. We consider these to be extremely serious situations and to show imminent deaths. We call for measures to be taken to guarantee the lives and integrity of these people and families, human rights defenders.

Brasília / DF, September 15, 2017.

Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders

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Deaths announced in Brazil: 2017

1. Rural Workers

1.1 *Community fears attacks and murders. After several threats and gunshots, a couple of the settlers are tortured and kept in private jail*

*Mato Grosso. Settlement Raimundo Viera III
(Lot 10) - Gleba Gama, located in the
municipality of Nova Guarita – MT*

Settlement families live under constant threats and violence ranging from threats of death, torture, private jail, burning houses, fence cuts, poisoning by aerial spraying of pesticides, firearms shooting homes and vehicles. Several reports and incident reports have already been made and drawn up by the State Military and Civil Police. The members of the Braga family who are interested in the area are identified as responsible. Despite denunciations made to several public agencies, to date no measures have been taken to protect the families, as in the last attack in August.

On August 19 of this year a couple of settlers were tortured and kept in private jail. The events took place in the presence of the daughter of the 3-year-old couple. At the time, the attackers fired guns at the settlers who tried to rescue the victims. The Nova Guarita Military Police, on arrival at the scene, arrested the couple who suffered the violence, while the attackers were released and the firearms were not seized.

1.2 *Landless families frightened by gunmen*

*Encampment Hugo Chavez
Marabá-PA*

The Pau D'Arco massacre, which occurred last May 24 in Pará, is not the only case of violence in that state. At the same time as nine workers and one rural worker were brutally murdered by police forces at Fazenda [plantation] Santa Lúcia, others are in conflict, threatened, expelled and violated as a result of the struggle waged by the land and the realization of agrarian reform.

The Hugo Chavez encampment, located in the Teresa Fazenda, in Marabá, said to be owned by

the grileiro [person who claims ownership of land using false titles] Rafael Saldanha, is an example of this scenario of devastating violence, involving appropriation of public lands and legitimization of the state's land grabbing - the fazendeiro [plantation "owner"] managed land legalization next to Iterpa.

Since the area was appropriated by the grileiro, the conflicts have escalated in the place. The encampment is constantly the victim of attempted expulsion by gunmen. The acampados [those living in the encampment] report that on July 16, 2017, gunmen fired toward the camp and set fire to the rural workers' dwellings and fields: "On Sunday, the whole afternoon [they] were firing and they surrounded us as well. They put several armed men on the roads leading to the camp."

1.3 *Dumping threat poses a threat to the lives of rural workers in the occupation of Canaan*

Rondônia, municipalities of Ariquemes and Theobroma

This is an occupation of more than 15 years, in the region that involves the municipalities of Ariquemes and Theobroma, with more than 300 families and large peasant production. However, there is a judicial order of eviction, and even if agrarian conflict has been raised, the agrarian judge of the Rondônia Court of Justice has already determined notification to the National Force and the Military Police to effect the eviction. The families, apprehensive, report that they resist as far as they can.

2. Indigenous people

2.1 *After an attack that left more than 22 injured, Gamela Indians suffer from gunshots, threats and are at risk of death*

Maranhão, municipality of Viana.

Even after the reports of the brutal attack on the Akroá Gamela indigenous people in the Cajueiro Piraí village, located in the municipality of Viana/MA, the situation remains tense. Solely in the month of August there were new gunshots against the Cajueiro Piraí village, where part of this ethnic group is concentrated.

We are concerned about the high level of violence against the traditional peoples and communities of Maranhão. Currently in the state there are about 376 people and/or communities that experience, in some way, the situation of violence and conflicts in the countryside. Solely in 2016 196 occurrences of violence against the people of the countryside were recorded. Maranhão was the state with the most murdered Indians in 2016.

The indigenous people of Gamela live in the state of Maranhão and, since 2015, are returning to their ancestral territory, in the vicinity of the municipalities of Viana, Matinha and Penalva, due to the absence of measures by the Brazilian State to demarcate their lands.

The aforementioned attack refers to April 30, 2017, when local fazendeiros gathered around a group they called "Movement for Peace," with the participation of politicians, promoted a violent attack with the use of firearms, sticks and stones against Gamela Indians, in the Povoado Bays, rural area of Viana (MA). The attackers were gathered to attack the Indians at least since early afternoon, near the town of Bahias, in an area called Santero, as convened by social networks and local radio programs - including statements of support from the federal deputy Aluísio Guimarães Mendes Filho (PTN/MA).

As a result of the violent action against the Indians, 22 tanks suffered some type of injury - among these Indians, two children and a pre-adolescent. Among the adults, five were shot and of these, three suffered amputation of the hands due to the attack with the use of a white weapon.

2.2 Guarani-Kaiowá Indians continue to suffer attacks and threats

Mato Grosso do Sul

The Missionary Indigenous Council (CIMI) denounced, in 2016, several paramilitary attacks organized by fazendeiros against the Guarani-Kaiowá indigenous people. Cases like the one that resulted in the death of Clodiodi Aquileu generated great commotion. Filming by the Indians revealed several armed men, burning their homes and belongings, in a brutal episode that in addition to one death left six indigenous people injured, including a child.

From 2015 to 2016, more than 33 attacks on the Guarani-Kaiowá people were recorded, with two deaths and dozens of shootings.

Every day, indigenous people come in contact with organizations and authorities to report new attacks, threats, and firing firearms against their communities. Currently the Guarani-Kaiowá people number approximately 60 thousand indigenous people, living in more than 50 communities.

We consider that the recent attacks on the indigenous people of the Dourados reserve, in retaliation for resumption of the traditional territories of the Guarani Kaiowá people, demonstrate a tragedy announced at risk of massacre of this people!

2.3 Chief Babau and Tupinambá leaders continue to be victims of assassination attempts and threats

Bahia. Ilheus

The Tupinambás suffer all kinds of prejudices, physical and cultural violence. The death threats are constant and their leaders are persecuted, raped and imprisoned. The most serious case is that experienced by Chief Babau Tupinambá, who has been attacked for years, threats of death and persecution. Trapped for his role in defending the rights of the Tupinambá people, Babau became a victim of an attack within the prison system.

In 2016, called by natives to verify the illegal extraction of sand carried out by a mining company that illegally exploits the indigenous territory, the chief was met with shots by gunmen. In addition to being a victim of the attack, Babau was arrested by police officers who, according to the indigenous people, are involved in the conflict.

Despite the many allegations about the risk of assassination of the leadership, the threats persist and extend even to his relatives, like his brother, who this year was the victim of an assassination attempt.

2.4 Massacre of isolated indigenous people known as Flecheiros, warns of extermination

Amazonas

The Karipuna indigenous lands, already demarcated, are being targeted for invasion, deforestation and inappropriate subdivision. Recent news scandalized the entire country with information still incomplete that already indicate more than 20 deaths of archers in the Amazon. The Brazilian State has not made efforts to prevent land theft, has failed to monitor the isolated peoples of the region, nor has it used resources to carry out investigations into the killings

The invisibility of the case, which only came to the public through the actions of civil society, and the State's omission in the face of death, indicates that there is a risk of extermination of the isolated Indians for the appropriation of their lands and the natural resources that exist there.

3. Quilombolas*

3.1 After the massacre that left six dead, there remain the threats and risk of further attacks

*Quilombola community of Lúna,
located in the municipality of
Lençóis / BA*

The situation of violence and threat that resulted in the slaughter that took place on August 6 of this year, when six quilombola men were murdered, still creates insecurity in the community. The facts are related to the process of land legalization of the quilombola territory and to the interest of multinational companies to settle in the region to exploit the natural resources. This is clearly an agrarian conflict.

Reports and testimonies pointed out that the community was already frightened by previous

* Traditional Afro-Brazilian communities originally formed by runaway slaves.

events such as school break-ins and the murder of another quilombola in June of this year, as well as threatening notes left under the doors.

As the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office observed during a visit to the community: "a) they live under a continuous and severe state of fear, apprehension, anguish and hopelessness, due to the justifiable fear of new criminal attacks that result in injuries to the physical integrity and/or life of the quilombolas, denoting a serious case of public insecurity; b) there was an abrupt exodus of its inhabitants. According to reports, that community had 42 (forty-two) families; after the unfortunate episode, there were only 12 left; c) the remaining residents no longer send their children to the Irineu Dutra Municipal School, the only one existing in that community, for the apprehension of new attacks; and d) the driver of the school bus refuses to enter the quilombola community, out of fear;"

3.2 *After attacks on quilombolas, tensions in the Marobá dos Teixeira*

Municipality of Almenara, Region of the Jequitinhonha Valley in Minas Gerais

The couple Jurandir and Rosa, members of the Marobá dos Teixeira community, were victims of attempted homicide on March 24, 2017, by armed and hooded men who invaded the house, beat defender Jurandir to death. At the same time, the quilombola Rosa was tossed to the ground, tied up and covered, being forced to ingest an unknown liquid, while at the same time attempting to inject a substance with a combustible characteristic into her arm. After the incident occurred, the couple registered Boletim de Ocorrência and the case is being investigated by the authorities of the municipality of Almenara as simple assault and bodily injury, trying to disqualify the political motivation of the aggressions.

Following this, recurrent threats are being attributed to people in the quilombola community, in a resurgence of the conflict established by fazendeiros in the region - which increases the risk of new attacks occurring, since the securitization process is at the stage of contestation to the anthropological report, one of the moments of greatest conflict between the parties involved.

3.3 *Quilombo Rio dos Macacos experiences beatings, torture and threats*

Rural area on the border of the Salvador and Simões Filhos, Bahia

Quilombo Rio dos Macacos, located in a rural area on the border of the municipalities of Salvador and Simões Filhos, Bahia, continues with the partial titling process that has not been completed. In addition to usurping 2/3 of the traditional identified territory, once the community prevented the Navy from building a wall, barring community access to the Macacos River, the Ministry of Defense ordered the interruption of the construction of two independent access points, with works already started to allow the community access to the territory without the embarrassment of crossing the Naval Village.

In the meantime, the community has been suffering from beatings, torture and everyday threats. The Navy, although hampering the access of quilombo supporters to the territory, has apparently allowed the free movement of armed men from the urban communities neighboring the quilombo, threatening and causing fear and despair to the quilombolas.

So far, two people from the community have already been murdered and there is no proper investigation of the crimes. The most recent episode, which shows the risk of further murders taking place in the community, occurred on 08/15/17 when a house was burned down with a three-month-old baby inside it, who fortunately was rescued in time by the mother.

4. Fisherfolk

4.1 *Family of Zé Menino, fisherman killed in July this year, is at risk of death*

*Community of Ilha da Croa,
Municipality of Araioses - MA –
Baixo Parnaíba*

About nine years ago, the Croa Island Community was been threatened by fazendeiros and bodyguards who are fighting for the territory in question. It is an area of the Union, a land of high quality, productive and highly valued in the Parnaíba river bed, a region of fisherfolk and family farmers.

On July 5, 2017, fisherfolk and family farmers were surprised by heavily armed bodyguards who shot at fisherfolk, fatally striking the fisherman José Menino, who was cowardly murdered at the behest of fazendeiros trying to take hold of territories in the Community.

Since the death of Zé Menino, the fisherman's family has been receiving threats from the aggressors.

5. Violence in the urban context

5.1 *Defending the right to housing is threatened with death*

*National Union for People's
Housing, Manaus / AM*

The context of violence against movements that struggle for housing also does not escape the reality of other human rights defenders. The Committee has drawn attention to the difficulty of monitoring the violence in the cities. The case that we report here is emblematic to demonstrate this reality.

On August 17, 2017, around 10 o'clock in the morning, heavily armed men appeared in the

Housing Complex knocking on the doors of the residents and raised their shirts showing the weapons and saying that from that date they would control the Loteamento Orquídeas I, II and III, in the neighborhood Santa Etelvina, and that they would have come from another neighboring city with order to fulfill this mission.

The families, frightened, called one of the leaders of the social movement, Cristiane Amaral Sales Teles, to the place, who was threatened by a man said to represent a person named Mano Xavier. As of this date, according to reports, she has been threatened several times with phone calls in which these people say: "they will pull me out of my house and rip me out of me." (Sic)

The case of Cristiane resembles the serious situation of several leaders of the homeless movement, that are threatened of death and demand urgent protection, for the guarantee of their lives

5.2 Human rights defenders who are militants of the favela movements are victims of the security forces through kidnappings, attacks and intimidation

Rio de Janeiro - RJ

In Rio de Janeiro, militants and slum dwellers struggling against institutional violence have been systematically intimidated and seriously threatened by civilian and military police. There are records ranging from illegal telephone monitoring, lightning kidnappings, home invasion, sexual harassment, rape and even firearms firing at defenders and defenders.

Between January and July 2017, 642 people were killed as a result of police operations in Rio de Janeiro, most of these deaths were summary executions against black youths. This situation becomes all the more serious in a context in which the Armed Forces, through the Law and Order Guarantee (GLO) Decree signed by Michel Temer, were authorized to work in public security in Rio de Janeiro.

The institution of the GLO itself is blatantly unconstitutional and represents a further step in the militarization of the city, especially in the poor and peripheral territories, on which the current public security policy is based, structurally based on racism and the criminalization of poverty and militants of human rights.

The imminence of deaths of human rights defenders in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro is a fact that calls attention to the whole society committed to human rights.

5.3 LGBTI rights defenders are persecuted and threatened by fundamentalists and neo-Nazis in Curitiba/PR*

Also in the context of urban violence is the situation experienced by LGBTI human rights

* Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

defenders.

Since 2005, LGBTI human rights defenders have been facing threats and persecutions in Curitiba/PR. These facts began after the delivery of a dossier to the police authorities presenting serious denunciations by skinheads, which culminated in the arrest of a group of neo-Nazis. The following year, defenders Igo Martini and Márcio Marins were physically assaulted by three men, and one of those investigated confirmed the motivation of the attack.

In 2012, the threats returned with promises of physical assaults. The menacers created false profiles in social networks under the name of leaderships with the objective of offending public people, the media and mainly politicians and public managers. Defender Márcio, included in the Human Rights Defenders Protection Program (PPDDH), received several calls in which the persecutor gave details of his routine, the clothes he wore and the building where he resided. The headquarters of the organization had the door broken open.

The threats in social networks against LGBTI leaders and events are constant. The aggressors have support from other groups like the Punks and the Antifas. It is well known that Curitiba hosts Neonazist groups, as an example in 2015 was held in the capital of Paraná an event called Dezembrada for the creation of the Nationalist Front.

These facts demonstrate not only the continuity of violence against these defenders, but also a process of organizing and strengthening groups for the commission of crimes against the LGBTI population.

5.4. Coordinator of the right to housing movement is the victim of attempted murder and has its work restricted due to the continuity of the threats

Settlement Zilda Xavier, in Planaltina/DF

On July 20, 2017, Luciano Moreira, Coordinator of the Movement of Workers for Rights - MTD, was the victim of an attempted murder.

The facts are related to the Zilda Xavier Settlement, in Planaltina/DF. The threats are not restricted to Luciano, the aggressors threaten and intimidate villagers and other settlers.

The fact must be verified with rigor, and the life of Luciano, as well as of the other defenders of the settlement Zilda Xavier, must be protected.

Brasília / DF, September 15, 2017.

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