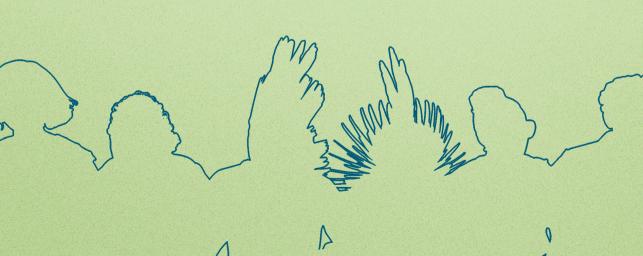
ONTHE FRONTLINE

Violence against human rights defenders in Brazil

2023 and 2024



Terra de Direitos

Justiça Global

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ON THE FRONT LINE

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PRESENTATION OF

ustiça Global and Terra de Direitos have been working to protect human rights defenders in Brazil for over 20 years. Together, the two organizations took part in the creation of the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders in 2004 and in the construction of the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PPDDH), launched in the same year.

Since then, they have periodically produced the study *Na Linha de Frente - Violência Contra Defensoras e Defensores de Direitos Humanos no Brasil (On the Front Line - Violence Against Human Rights Defenders in Brazil)*, which seeks to present the reality faced by individuals and groups working to defend rights such as land, territory, the environment, housing, education, and health, as well as combating racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression. The publication also aims to formulate recommendations to enhance the protection policies promoted by the State and civil society.

The survey began in 2002 and was conducted by Justiça Global in partnership with Front Line Defenders. In collaboration with Terra de Direitos, a new edition was published in 2005. Since then, the organizations have released three other publications, covering the period from 1997 to 2012. In 2023, when the initiative was resumed, a new methodological approach was adopted, with an expanded focus and systematic collection of quantitative data for the period from 2019 to 2022, aiming to enhance the monitoring of the human rights defenders' situation in Brazil. This is therefore the second edition based on quantitative data and the ninth in the historical series.

This edition of *Na Linha de Frente* looks at the first two years of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's third term in office, between 2023 and 2024. During this period, 486 cases of violence against human rights defenders were mapped. In total, 318 episodes were accounted for, including 55 murders, 96 Attempt on one's life, 175 threats, and 120 cases of criminalization, among other data that will be detailed throughout the report.

President Lula's third term began marked by a serious attack on democracy and its main institutions. On January 8, 2023, hundreds of Bolsonaro supporters stormed the Esplanada dos Ministérios in Brasília (DF). They vandalized the headquarters of

the three branches of government: the National Congress, the Planalto Palace, and the Federal Supreme Court.

Subsequent investigations and legal¹ proceedings revealed that these acts were part of a violent coup attempt by far-right groups supporting Jair Bolsonaro (Liberal Party), former president (2019-2022) who was defeated in the 2022 presidential elections by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers' Party), in an election campaign marked by heightened political and electoral violence².

The attempted coup by former President Jair Bolsonaro and his political group, including senior military officers³, was the strongest expression of a government that promoted major setbacks in the field of human rights and social policies, with obstacles to the work of social movements and civil society organizations and harsh attacks on those who fight for the guarantee and achievement of rights, as pointed out in the latest edition of the survey Na Linha de Frente - Violência Contra Defensoras e Defensores de Direitos Humanos no Brasil (2019-2022) (On the Front Line - Violence Against Human Rights Defenders in Brazil⁴).

This new edition of the survey would hardly have been carried out if the coup d'état had taken place and a dictatorship had been established in the country. In addition to high-ranking government officials, who were targeted by the coup plotters⁵, leaders

- **1.** Folha de São Paulo. *January 8 was incited to justify a coup d'état, according to the Federal Police.* Published on 11/22/2025. Available at: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2024/11/8-de-janeiro-foi-incitado-para-justificar-golpe-de-estado-aponta-relatorio-da-pf.shtml.
- 2. See: Justiça Global and Terra de Direitos. *Political and electoral violence in Brazil (2nd edition) Overview of human rights violations between September 2, 2020, and October 31, 2022*. Available at: https://www.global.org.br/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/RELATORIO-VIOLENCIA-POLITICA-E-ELEITORAL-2-ED.pdf
- **3.** CNN Brasil. PGR: The core of the coup included high-ranking government officials and the Armed Forces. Published on 02/18/25. Available at: https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/pgr-nucleo-do-golpe-incluia-alto-escalao-do-governo-e-forcas-armadas/.
- **4.** Terra de Direitos e Justiça Global *Na Linha de Frente (On the Front Line) Violence against Human Rights Defenders in Brazil (2019-2022).* Available at: https://terradedireitos.org.br/nalinhadefrente/.
- **5.** UOL. *PF reports plan to assassinate Lula, Alckmin, and Moraes in coup plot.* Published on 11/20/2024. Available at: https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2024/11/20/pf-relata-plano-pa-ra-assassinar-lula-alckmin-e-moraes-em-trama-de-golpe.htm

of social movements and other human rights defenders would certainly have been hit hard, and spaces for social participation would have been eliminated.

The January 8, 2023, episode symbolizes the culmination of a process of radicalization and strengthening of the far-right in Brazil, with political, ideological, and institutional roots that have deepened over the years of Jair Bolsonaro's presidency. Under Bolsonaro's administration, for example, there has been a significant relaxation of rules on access to, possession, and carrying of firearms in Brazil⁶, which has contributed to the strengthening of militias and ideological armed groups, such as the Invasão Zero (Zero Invasion) Movement — an organization formed by large landowners and far-right politicians whose main objective is to prevent the recovery of land by indigenous peoples and social movements for agrarian reform, such as the Landless Workers' Movement (MST).

The Invasão Zero (Zero Invasion) Movement has promoted coordinated actions aimed at illegal "repossession" and territorial control through violent actions. It was during one of these actions that the indigenous leader, teacher, and shaman Nega Pataxó, as Maria de Fátima Muniz was known, was murdered in January 2024, in the south of the state of Bahia⁷.

On another front, the group has joined forces with the rural and agribusiness caucus in Congress to criminalize social movements, such as the MST, and indigenous peoples. One example of this type of action was the establishment of the Joint Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the MST (CPMI do MST)⁸ in the National Congress in 2023, initiated by representatives and senators from the ruralist and far-right

^{6.} Nexo Jornal. Brazil's active firearm registrations increased from 638,000 in 2017 to 1.5 million in 2022. A growth of 144% in six years. Firearm registrations have increased by 144% in 6 years. Available at: https://www.nexojornal.com.br/grafico/2023/07/20/registros-de-arma-de-fogo-aumentaram-144-em-6-anos.

^{7.} Folha de São Paulo. *Indigenous woman killed in Bahia; two farmers arrested*. Available at: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2024/01/indigena-e-morta-no-sul-da-bahia-dois-fazendeiros-sao-presos.shtml.

^{8.} Chamber of Representatives. *Joint Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Landless Workers' Movement (MST)*. Available at: <a href="https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-temporarias/parlamentar-de-inquerito/57a-legislatura/cpi-sobre-o-movimento-dos-trabalhadores-sem-terra-mst#documentos-normas

base, with the stated aim of investigating the actions of the MST. In practice, the commission served as a political instrument for attacking, delegitimizing, and criminalizing the fight for the land. The CPMI did not, however, provide any evidence of widespread crimes allegedly committed by the MST, and its final report focused on ideological attacks and vague recommendations.

On the other hand, various processes of resistance have emerged or intensified in response to the policy of dismantling rights, attacks on minorities and the environment, and the advance of authoritarian and conservative agendas, especially in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. For example, social movements, civil society organizations, left-wing parties, and other actors repeatedly appealed to the Supreme Court (STF) during Bolsonaro's administration to try to curb violations of rights and constitutional setbacks.

During the context of covid-19, three Arguments for Failure to Comply with a Fundamental Precept (ADPF) stood out: ADPF 709, which demanded action from the federal government to protect indigenous peoples during the pandemic; ADPF 742, aimed at guaranteeing the rights of quilombola communities in dealing with the health crisis; and ADPF 635, aimed at confronting police violence in Rio de Janeiro, especially against favela and black communities, and from which the minister Edson Fachin ordered precautionary measures to limit the actions of police officers during the covid-19 crisis.

It is also worth mentioning ADPF 828, filed as part of the Zero Evictions Campaign, which called for a halt to evictions and forced removals, and repossessions in urban and rural areas during the health crisis. The campaign, launched in June 2020 by popular movements, civil society organizations, collectives, public defenders, and universities, aims to ensure decent housing and the permanence of families in both rural and urban areas. In June 2021, minister Luís Roberto Barroso granted an injunction preventing evictions and removals for six months, which was extended several times until October 2022, when the measure ceased to have effect. The Zero Eviction Campaign highlights that the decision prevented the eviction of around 500,000 people⁹, marking a milestone in the discussion about the social function of property and the limits of the judiciary's action in land conflicts.

^{9.} Data provided by the National Union of Teachers of Higher Education Institutions (ANDES - Sindicato Nacional). *Mobilization of popular movements guarantees suspension of evictions until June 2022*. Available at: https://www.andes.org.br/conteudos/noticia/mobilizacao-de-movimentos-populares-garante-suspensao-de-despejos-ate-junho-de-20221.

As a strategic outcome of this process, the National Council of Justice approved Resolution No. 510 of June 26, 2023¹⁰, regulating the creation of the National Land Solutions Commission and Regional Land Solutions Commissions, which establishes guidelines for conducting technical visits to areas subject to possessory disputes and establishes protocols for handling actions involving evictions or repossessions of collective housing or productive areas of vulnerable populations.

It is in this context of the transition between the government of Jair Bolsonaro and the third term of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva that the new edition of the study "Na Linha de Frente - Violence Against Human Rights Defenders in Brazil " (2023-2024) is set.

After four years marked by numerous setbacks, civil society, social movements in the city and countryside, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, traditional communities, and other actors had high expectations of a government that would halt the process of dismantling public policies and guarantee rights. These groups thus sought to influence the federal government transition process, between November 2022 and January 2023, by presenting agendas and proposals to the newly elected administration.

Upon assuming his third presidential term, President Lula recreated the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, abolishing the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights that Bolsonaro had established. Similarly, he reinstated two other ministries: the Ministry of Racial Equality and the Ministry of Women. In an unprecedented move, the government has established the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, which will be headed by indigenous leader Sonia Guajajara. Its mission is to strengthen the protection of indigenous rights, guarantee the demarcation of lands, promote the preservation of indigenous cultures, and, above all, stop the attacks and setbacks that this population has historically suffered, particularly during Bolsonaro's presidency. Along the same lines, Lula is reestablishing the National Agrarian Ombudsman's Office — linked to the Ministry of Agrarian Development — an important institutional channel responsible for receiving, analyzing, mediating, and forwarding demands related to agrarian conflicts and land issues.

^{10.} National Council of Justice. *Resolution 510 of June 26, 2023.* Available at: https://atos.cnj.jus.br/atos/detalhar/5172.

The creation of ministries and institutional structures in the field of human rights is undoubtedly an important step forward. However, the dismantling of the public machine since the 2016 coup against President Dilma Rousseff (PT)¹¹ has gone much deeper than previously thought. With low budget allocations and a shortage of human resources, ministries in the field of human rights are unable to implement actions to tackle the serious and structural violations in the country.

This situation is even worse in the face of a conservative National Congress, marked by the presence of a majority of parliamentarians linked to what is known as the BBB (Bullet, Bible, and Bovine/Soybean) Caucus, with agendas centered around the police, weapons, fundamentalist evangelicals and agribusiness, and openly opposed to the field of human rights. The composition of the National Congress drawn up in the same elections that elected Lula hijacked the budget through a battle with the executive branch over parliamentary amendments, which resulted in the late approval of the Annual Budget Law (LOA) for 2025, impacting the actions of the executive branch, including in the field of human rights.

The context presented above highlights the urgency with which the structural causes of violations must be addressed, as well as the need to identify, dismantle, and hold accountable the groups and segments that perpetrate the violence. It is unacceptable that criminal organizations like Invasão Zero continue to commit crimes without being held accountable. It is unacceptable that agribusiness sectors continue to finance actions that endanger democracy with impunity, as evidenced by the study published by De Olho nos Ruralistas - Observatório do Agronegócio no Brasil (Eye on Ruralists - Agribusiness Observatory in Brazil)¹², which mapped 142 agribusiness executives who allegedly provided logistical or financial support to coup attempts between the second half of 2022 and January 8, 2023.

This survey shows that military police officers were involved in 45 violations, including 5 murders, which demonstrates that state agents continue to perpetrate violence against human rights defenders. And some of these crimes are still brought before the military courts, a special forum that has often promoted impunity in ca-

^{11.} Brasil de Fato. *Lembrar à imprensa: foi golpe!* Available at: https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2023/08/23/lembrar-a-imprensa-foi-golpe/.

^{12.} De Olho nos Ruralistas. *Study identifies 142 agribusiness entrepreneurs involved in coup attempt.* Available at: https://deolhonosruralistas.com.br/2025/06/25/relatorio-agrogolpistas/.

ses of serious human rights violations. In this sense, it is imperative to review the role and performance of Military Justice, as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights observed when it ruled in April 2024 on the case of *Antonio Tavares and others, vs. Brazil*¹³. The lawsuit deals with the murder of a landless rural worker by the Paraná Military Police in May 2000, as a way of preventing the right to protest. In the ruling, the Court recognized that the Military Justice does not have the competence to judge and investigate military personnel who commit crimes against civilians. In addition, it ordered the inclusion of specific content in the curriculum for training public security agents to ensure respect for the rights of protesters.

In addition, it is essential to advance in the field of rights guarantees with the implementation of the National Plan for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the expansion of the demarcation of indigenous territories, the titling of quilombola lands, the settlement of camped people, agrarian reform, and the fight against organized crime in rural and urban areas. It is essential to tackle impunity for crimes against human rights defenders through rigorous investigations that result in the perpetrators being held accountable. Above all, it is vital to make progress in effectively valuing and protecting human rights defenders who are, in essence, guardians of democracy.

^{13.} On May 2, 2000, an action by the Paraná Military Police resulted in the murder of rural worker Antonio Tavares and injuries to more than 197 members of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), on the banks of the BR-227 highway, in Campo Largo (PR). The action was aimed at preventing a march for agrarian reform from taking place in Curitiba on that date. The investigation into the facts was closed by the Military Court, and the police officer involved was not held responsible. The case was reported to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in 2004, and in 2021 it was submitted to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights by the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), Terra de Direitos, and Justiça Global.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

his data collection compiles cases in which violence is used against individuals who defend human rights, thereby preventing them from continuing to advocate for those rights.

Thus, cases that meet the following criteria are considered:

- The victim is a human rights defender;
- Violence was motivated as a way of targeting, constraining, paralyzing or preventing the actions of people or groups defending rights.

Who are the human rights defenders?

The people, groups, leaders, peoples, communities, social movements, or collectives who work to prevent and confront violations, as well as to promote and defend human rights — whether individual or collective, in their political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions — are human rights defenders. They resist development models based on the exploitation of nature and human labor, sustained by racism, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression. Indigenous peoples and quilombolas fighting to defend their territories, landless rural workers demanding agrarian reform, homeless people organized in defense of their right to housing, and activists working to guarantee the rights of women, black people, and LGBTQIAPN+ individuals are examples of human rights defenders in Brazil.

As in the last edition of the survey, cases that, although they constitute violations of rights against groups or individuals, are not intended to use violence to prevent action in defense of rights were not included.

Therefore, the following cases are **not** considered:

- a. Land invasion for economic exploitation, such as deforestation;
- **b.** Judicial evictions (illegal evictions against organized movements are included);
- c. Cases of femicide:
- **d.** Episodes of racism, homophobia, and transphobia that have not been motivated by an attempt to delegitimize or destabilize human rights defenders because of their work, even if these are criminal practices.

Unlike the last edition, this study did not count cases of suicide. Although it is recognized that threats and violence against human rights defenders seriously affect their mental health, it has been estimated that most deaths by suicide are not reported or, when they are, do not provide sufficient information about their causes, which makes it difficult to identify and properly record these cases.

Cases of sexual harassment were also not included, since in this edition it was noted that such episodes are generally associated with other forms of violence already registered, such as attempts on one's life. Even so, reading the data will allow us to identify situations in which this type of violence is present.

Types of violence

The cases identified in this data collection were categorized based on the type of violence identified in the same categories as in the first edition, except for suicide and sexual harassment, whose cases were no longer counted, as described above. The following categories were considered:



Threats: encompasses any direct, indirect, explicit, or implicit form of danger to the lives of people who defend human rights;



Physical aggression: acts of physical violence against an individual or a group of human rights defenders, with the intention of attacking or repressing the defender's actions;



Murder: actions that result in the death of individual human rights defenders;



Attempts on one's life: actions that constitute an attack on the lives of individuals and put the safety of people and groups at risk;



Criminalization: measures that use institutional means to attribute a crime to a person or group that defends human rights. At this point, episodes involving the arrest of defenders or judicial and administrative proceedings were considered;



Deslegitimação: all forms of stigmatization or embarrassment of a defender or a group. This category encompasses episodes of slander, libel, defamation, or disparagement that have occurred as a way of delegitimizing the actions of this individual or collective in defense of rights.

In many cases, human rights defenders are simultaneously the target of different forms of violence. It is common, for example, for them to be delegitimized or threatened at the same time as being physically attacked. In these cases, for the purposes of systematizing the data, only one type of violence was counted per episode, considering the most serious.

Types of fight of human rights defenders

This data collection also aims to analyze the violence committed against those who defend human rights, based on the type of fight or the main right in question being defended by these individuals or collectives. It is understood that, in general, the banner of a fight of a person or movement is not restricted to a single cause. A housing movement, for example, also demands that families have access to health, education, and work. In many cases, violence against those who defend rights is an attempt to paralyze a certain type of fight and prevent the achievement of a right.

For this reason, in this survey, we chose to consider in the category the victim's predominant type of struggle, highlighted in the materials that reported the violence.

Based on the cases identified, the types of fights were divided into eight categories:



Land, territory, and the environment: refers to the fight to guarantee the right to land and territory, as well as the protection of the environment and ways of life that promote sustainable relations with territories. We have chosen here to treat territorial and environmental rights together, recognizing that the defense of territories by indigenous peoples, quilombolas, and other traditional peoples and communities is intrinsically linked to environmental preservation. The relations between these groups and their territories are based on caring for nature and the sustainable use of biodiversity. Likewise, guaranteeing land for peasant and family farming communities is a way of curbing the advance of predatory and environmentally damaging practices.



Human rights in general: used when it is not possible to identify a predominant fight. It covers situations in which, in the context of the violence, the victim was active on different fronts (for example, at the same time in unions, anti-racist and women's movements), without the episode being clearly related to one of these specific agendas. It also includes cases in which the victim's profile and available records do not allow for a precise determination of their focus of militancy.



LGBTQIAPN+ rights: refers to the defense of the rights and dignity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, crossdresser, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and other non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations. This category encompasses fights against discrimination and violence, as well as for visibility, respect, social inclusion, and equal access to public policies and services.



Gender equality: encompasses the fight for equality between men, women, and people of other gender identities. It also involves feminist activism and the defense of women's rights in their many forms



Racial equality: refers to the struggle of the black population to guarantee rights and confront racism in its structural, institutional, and everyday dimensions. It involves the struggle for racial justice, equal access to public policies, historical reparation, and the valorization of Afro-Brazilian identities, trajectories, and cultures.



Freedom of expression: this relates to the defense of the right to express oneself freely, both individually and collectively, including the work of grassroots communicators and journalists.



Housing and the right to the city: encompasses the struggle for access to decent housing and the construction of fairer and more inclusive cities. It involves demanding rights related to urban mobility, basic sanitation, security, leisure, and health. It includes movements for urban reform and against forced evictions.



Work (Labor): refers to the struggle for decent working conditions, fair wages, labor, and social security rights. It includes union action, mobilizations by professional categories, and the fight against job insecurity.

Data collection

The cases that form part of this data collection were identified through a series of actions that enabled the collection of a broad and representative sample of the context of violence affecting those who defend human rights. It is known, however, that this sample is illustrative. The scenario of intense threats and vulnerability faced by human rights defenders means that most cases are not publicized in any way.

The cases were identified by searches on:



Search engines (Google, Bing and DuckDuckGo).



Social media (Facebook, Instagram, and X [formerly Twitter]).



Websites of non-governmental organizations, representative bodies, and social movements that are often the target of this type of violence.



Contact with partner organizations, networks, and spaces for civil society participation, such as:

- National Human Rights Council (CNDH)
- Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders (CBDDH)
- Guarani Yvirupa Commission (CGY)
- Federation of Rural Workers and Family Farmers of the State of Maranhão (Fetaema)



Specialized reports and studies produced by leading organizations, such as:

- Brazilian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, "Travesti", Transgender, and Intersex Association (ABGLT)
- Pastoral Land Commission (CPT)
- Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI)
- Front Line Defenders
- Global Witness
- UN Women



Cases monitored by the organizations carrying out this study that have not been previously published

Online searches used terms such as the type or verb of the action, the instruments of violence, any groups of victims, or the regions where the cases were registered.

Even though they were included in other reports, the cases in which the investigations indicate that the deaths were caused by natural causes or situations such as murder and family fights, without the version having been contested, were not included in the data collection. Cases in which social movements challenge official information and accuse of targeted violence were considered.

This data collection also did not include cases of murders of human rights defenders in which it was not possible to identify the name of the victim.

Doubts about whether the cases were relevant were discussed in the group organizing the survey, which validated their inclusion or exclusion in the data collection.

Data systematization and analysis

The data collected was systematized in an electronic spreadsheet, whose columns identified information related to the victim (such as age, gender identity, color, or race), the characteristics of the violence (such as type and location), the perpetrator, and complaints or accountability measures. The table was created using the same tool as in the previous edition, with the addition of some fields to detail the movements and reference collectivities of the victim and the perpetrators, thereby enhancing the analysis based on the data.

Each case of violence was recorded in a row of the table, which was given a unique identification code (ID). However, different cases involving different victims could be part of the same episode of violence. In these situations, each episode of violence was assigned a different code (N), resulting in multiple cases and lines being inserted under the same episode code. The table below illustrates how the information was systematized. Two victims (ID 2 and 3) were accounted for in the same episode of violence (N2).

Example:

ID	N	Date	Victim's name	Category of victim
1	1	08/17/2023	Maria Bernadete Pacífico	Individual
2	2	01/17/2023	Nawir Brito de Jesus	Individual
3	2	01/17/2023	Samuel Cristiano do Amor Divino	Individual
4	3	01/21/2024	Maria Fátima Muniz de Andrade (Nega Pataxó)	Individual
5	3	01/21/2024	Nailton Muniz Pataxó	Individual
6	4	04/30/2024	Acampamento Osmar Azevedo	Collective

The episodes of violence identified also resulted in individual victims, i.e., individuals identified as victims of the action, or collective victims, in cases where the dispersed attack did not make it possible to specify the number of people affected. The illustrative table above shows, for example, individual victims and one collective victim - in this case, a camp belonging to the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) that was the target of an attack by farmers who surrounded the area, threatened the families, and destroyed the crops.

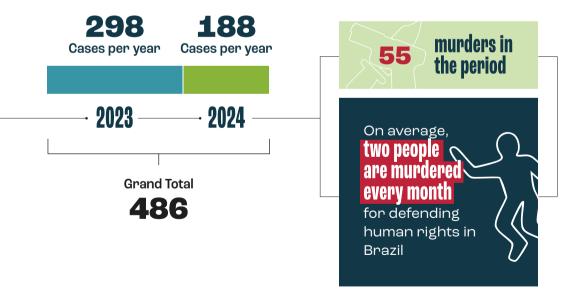
It is important to remember that each victim was only considered once within the same episode of violence, even if they suffered different forms of violence in the process.

The data was processed in the same spreadsheet editor used to systematize the cases.

VIOLENCE AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN NUMBERS

TIMELINE OF VIOLENCE

Between 2023 and 2024, **486 cases** of violence against human rights defenders were mapped, accounted for in **318 episodes.**



HISTORICAL SERIES DATA

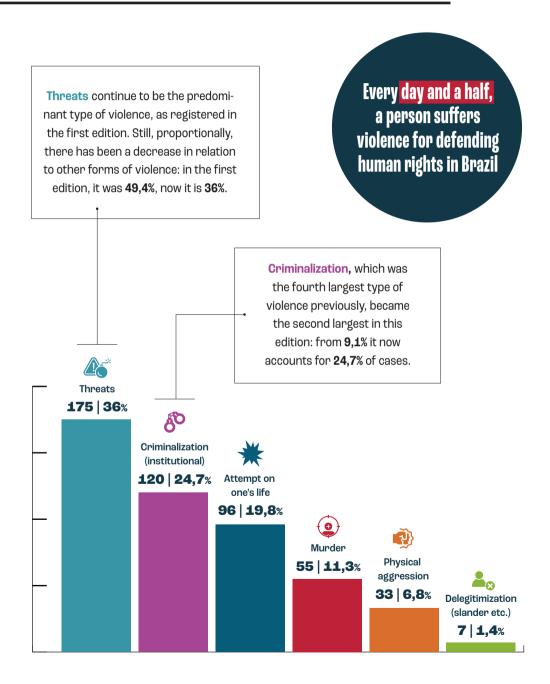


The year 2024 registered the lowest number of cases of violence against human rights defenders in the entire historical series, which began in 2019 - a drop of almost 37% compared to 2023. Even so, in 2023, the first year of the Lula administration, there was a 30% increase compared to 2022, and the number of cases registered, 298, is above the annual average of cases from the 1st edition¹⁴ of the survey, which was 292.75.

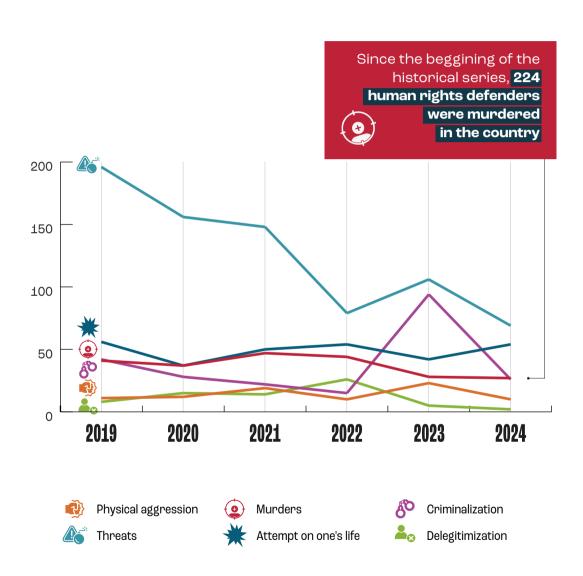
Because this edition covers two years, shorter than the last edition (which covered four years), the comparison between the two studies will not be based on total numbers, but on the average or percentage of violence presented in the two editions.

^{14.} The first edition of the survey covered the period from 2019 to 2022.

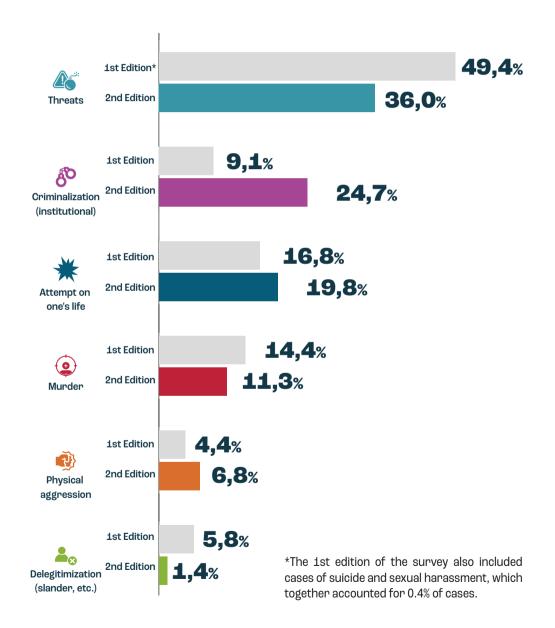
TYPES OF VIOLENCE REGISTERED BETWEEN 2023 AND 2024



EVOLUTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE

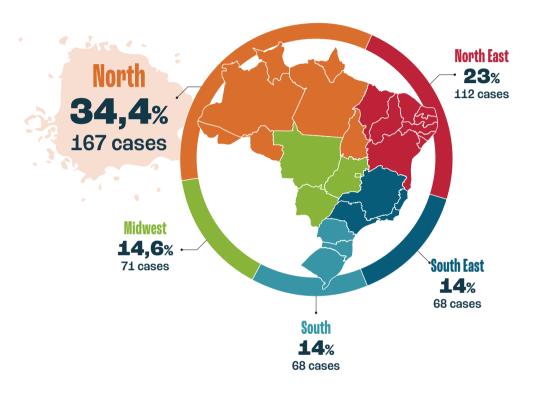


COMPARISON OF THE PROPORTIONALITY OF TYPES OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN THE TWO EDITIONS



REGION

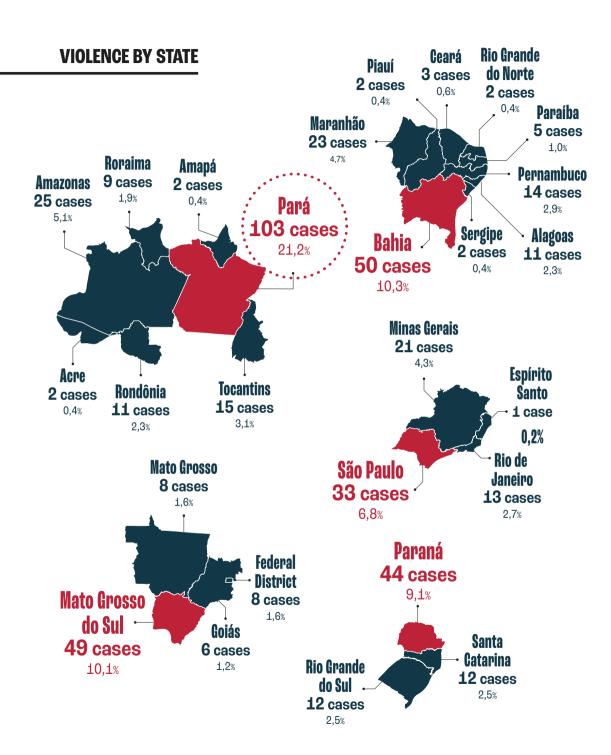
VIOLENCE BY REGION



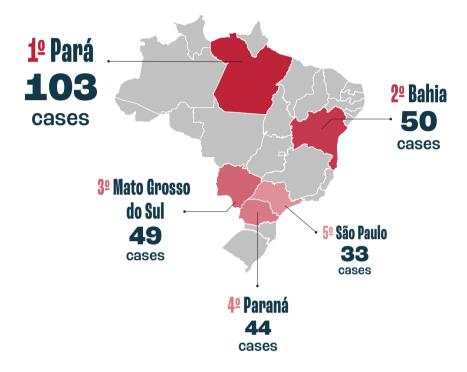
The majority of cases of violence occurred in the North, which accounted for ${\bf 1}$ in ${\bf 3}$ of the mapped cases.

Except for the Southeast and Northeast regions, the latter of which was the most violent region for human rights defenders in the first edition, all the other regions saw an increase in the percentage of cases in the current edition. One notable highlight is the southern region, which previously accounted for 6.9% of cases. Of the violence identified in this region, 64.7% occurred in Paraná, a state whose annual average of cases went from 6.75 between 2019 and 2022 to an average of 22 cases per year in the 2nd edition.

Of the 44 cases identified in Paraná in two years, 31 (70%) relate to violence against Avá-Guarani indigenous people.



RANKING OF THE MOST VIOLENT STATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



All of Brazil's federal units registered episodes of violence. The states that accounted for the most cases were **Pará** (103), **Bahia** (50), **Mato Grosso do Sul** (49) e **Paraná** (44).

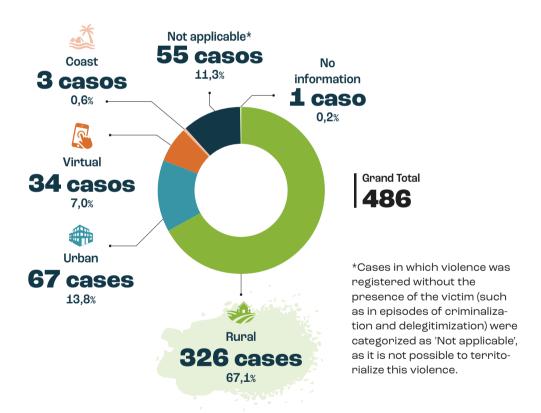
The state of Pará alone accounts for 1/5 of the registered violence, with 103 cases. In the state that will host the largest global climate event—COP30, to be held in Belém in November 2025—97 of the 103 cases accounted for relate to violence committed against defenders fighting for land, territory, and environmental rights, meaning that 94% of the violence committed in Pará was against those who are environmental and climate defenders by nature.

In the states that are part of the Legal Amazon, 198 cases were registered, which represents 40% of the total.

Of the 486 cases identified during the analyzed period, at least 262 (53.9%) occurred within the victims' territory of reference or at their home.

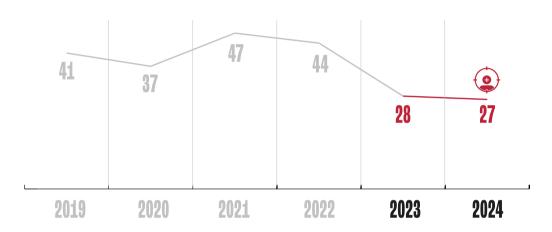
More than 67% took place in rural areas. In urban areas, 13.8% and 7% of cases were registered in a virtual environment.

ATTACK AREA



TYPES OF VIOLENCE





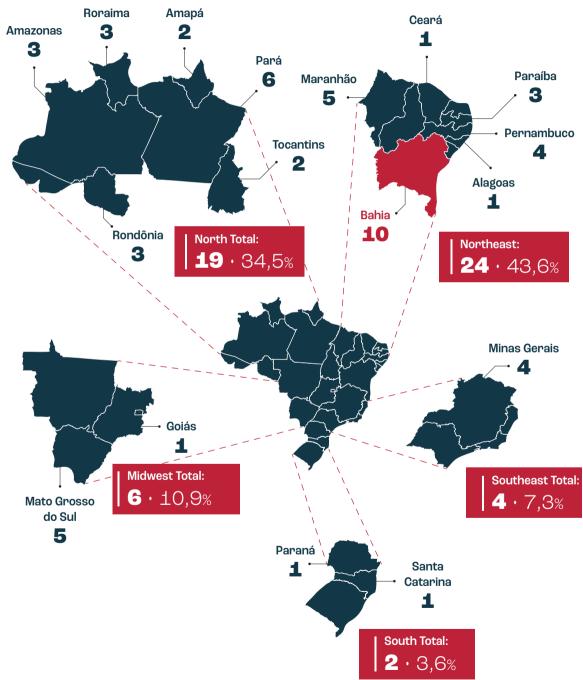
Although 2023 registered a higher total number of violent crimes than 2022—298 compared to 229 cases in 2022—when comparing the two years in terms of murder rates, there was a **36.4**% decrease in 2023.

The year 2024 registered the lowest number of murders in the historical series that has identified cases since 2019. However, the proportion of murders in relation to other types of violence is higher than in 2023. While in 2023 murders accounted for 9.4% of the violence registered in the year, in 2024 it was 14.4%.



STATES WHERE MURDERS HAVE BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR





Murders were accounted for in 17 States across the country.

Another three states accounted for five murders or more: Pará (6), Mato Grosso do Sul (5) e Maranhão (5). The highlight is **Bahia**, which accounted for

10 murders:

of these, **5 were indigenous and 2 were quilombolas**. All the indigenous victims were from the Pataxó and Pataxő Hã-Hã-Hãe people.

Together, the North and Northeast regions accounted for

of the murders during the period.

The drop in the number of murders of human rights defenders between 2023 and 2024 follows a trend registered in other data collections. The Atlas of Violence 2025¹⁵, produced by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) and the Brazilian Public Security Forum, regsitered a 2.3% reduction in the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants in the country between the years 2022 and 2023. The data collection of Conflicts in the Countryside 2024¹⁶, produced by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), also registered a drop in murders motivated by land conflicts in 2024: there were 13, while in 2023 there were 31 deaths. This is the lowest figure in the last 10 years, as reported in data collection carried out by the CPT.

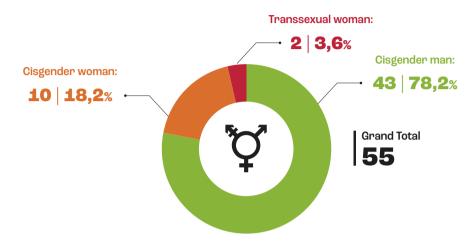
^{15.} CERQUEIRA, Daniel; BUENO, Samira (Coord.). *Atlas of violence 2025*. Brasília: Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada; Brazilian Public Security Forum, 2025. Available at: https://forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/atlas-violencia-2025.pdf.

^{16.} PASTORAL LAND COMMISSION (CPT). *Conflicts in the Countryside Brazil 2024*. Goiânia: Pastoral Land Commission, 2025. Dom Tomás Balduíno Documentation Center. Available at: https://cptnacional.org.br/documento/conflitos-no-campo-brasil-2024/.

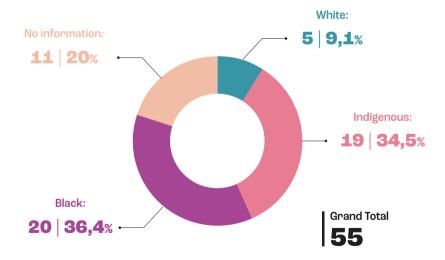
PROFILE OF MURDERED DEFENDERS



GENDER IDENTITY



COLOR OR RACE



The majority of those murdered were **black** (36.4%). Five of them were quilombolas, with murders accounted for in the states of Bahia (2), Maranhão (2), and Goiás (1).



Photo: Wallison Braga/Conag

MARIA BERNADETE PACÍFICO

Mãe (Mother) Bernadete aria Bernadete Pacífico, 72, was the name of the quilombola leader and Ialorixá, popularly known as Mãe Bernadete. She was murdered with 25 shots in her own home in the city of Simões Filho (BA), on the night of August 17, 2023.

In addition to being a quilombo leader and spiritual leader of Quilombo Pitanga dos Palmares, she served as Secretary of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality from 2009 to 2016 in the city of Simões Filho. She was a member of the National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities (CONAQ).

In 2017, one of Mãe Bernadete's sons, Fábio Gabriel Pacífico dos Santos, known as Binho do Quilombo, was also murdered in the territory, and, since then, she has been fighting for the crime to be solved.

As a result of the struggle for the titling of the Pitanga dos Palmares Quilombo, and the frequent denunciations of rights violations suffered by the quilombola community, Mãe Bernadete had been living with threats for years and was therefore included in the Federal Government's Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PPDDH).

Civil police investigations indicate that drug trafficking in the Simões Filho region is responsible for the murder of the leader. Mãe Bernadete played a fundamental role in defending the territory and its people, which hindered real estate interests, drug trafficking, and the exploitation of other illegal markets that affect the region, such as timber trafficking, for example.

Indigenous human rights defenders were victims in 19 murders (34% of all murders) in eight states: Bahia (6), Ceará (1), Maranhão (1), Mato Grosso do Sul (6), Minas Gerais (2), Pará (1), Roraima (3) and Santa Catarina (1). All the murders of human rights defenders registered in Mato Grosso do Sul and Roraima concern indigenous people.

n January 21, 2024, Maria Fátima Muniz de Andrade, known as Nega Pataxó, of the Pataxó Hã-hã-Hãe indigenous people, was murdered in the municipality of Potiraguá, in the south of Bahia. Nega was a spiritual leader and teacher who played an important role with indigenous youth and women. She used to integrate redes de saberes tradicionais de universidades brasileiras (traditional knowledge networks of Brazilian universities) and held a doctorate in Educação por Notório Saber (Education) from the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

According to Cacique Nailton, Nega Pataxó's brother, who was also shot at in the same episode of violence, the Pataxó Hã-Hã-Hãe were attacked by farmers during the retaking of the Inhuma Farm, claimed as indigenous territory. Reports indicate that the Military Police cleared the way for a rural militia to shoot at indigenous people, including older people and children. According to witnesses, the police themselves also fired shots.

The farmers and militiamen who killed Nega Pataxó, the latter consisting of military police officers who also provide private security services to farmers in their spare time, are part of a movement called Invasão Zero (Zero Invasion). This paramilitary organization began with calls on WhatsApp in a group of 200 farmers in the region. Thus, without any judicial decision and by violent means of their own, using lethal force against the community that promoted the retaking of their ancestral territory, they imposed barbarism.



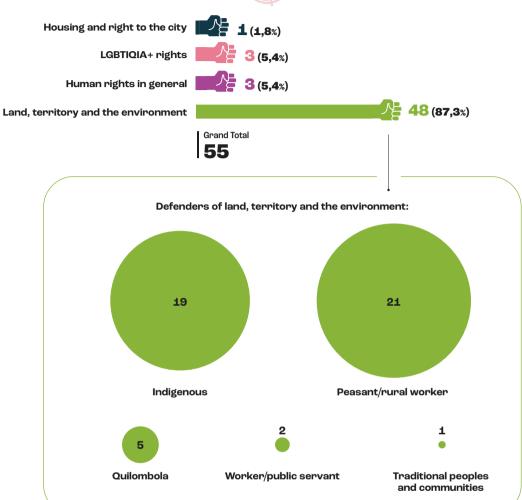
Photo: Teia dos Povos

MARIA FÁTIMA MUNIZ DE ANDRADE

Nega Pataxó



MURDERED DEFENDER'S FIGHT



- ▶ Men account for almost **80**% of murder victims;
- ▶ Black people were the victims in **36,4**% of murders;
- ▶ Indigenous people were victims in **34,5**% of the cases;
- Defenders of land, territory, and the environment account for **87,3**% of murder victims.
- ▶ Among the peasant community, (25,4%) of the victims were part of land struggle movements.

aqueu Fernandes Balieiro, known as Zaqueu da Vila, was murdered on September 29, 2024, in the rural area of Gameleiras, a municipality in the north of Minas Gerais. He was a leader of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and coordinated the Tamburi, Terra Preta, and Terra Verde encampments, formed on land that had been abandoned for more than three decades. Zaqueu was also a candidate for councillor for the Democratic Reform Party (PRD) in the 2024 municipal elections.

Zaqueu was receiving death threats and even requested support from the State Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists before he was brutally murdered.

Shot six times, Zaqueu's body was found on a side road near the district of Jacu das Piranhas, in Gameleiras (MG). A 57-year-old man, identified as João José de Oliveira, known as Joãozinho de Olímpio, was arrested on the same day on suspicion of involvement in the crime. He was also running for a seat on the city council and was identified by images that showed him following the victim before the murder. In the suspect's house, the police found more than 60 rounds of ammunition of various calibers.

Although electoral motivation was initially considered, it was ruled out by the authorities. Organizations such as the MST and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) say that the murder is related to agrarian conflicts in the region, where Zaqueu faced threats from landowners and powerful local people.



Zaqueu da Vila

Human rights defenders murdered in 2023

Victim's name	s name Municipality of violation State	
Abalau Lacheski da Cruz	Humaitá Amazona	
Cleide Silva Dalla Libera	Humaitá Amazona	
Gilson Silva da Rosa	Humaitá Amazonas	
Nauí Brito de Jesus	Itabela Bahia	
Samuel Cristiano do Amor Divino	Itabela	Bahia
Estevão da Costa Rodrigues	Nova Soure	Bahia
Daniel de Souza Santos	Pau Brasil	Bahia
Lucas Santos Oliveira	Pau Brasil	Bahia
Maria Bernadete Pacífico	Simões Filho	Bahia
Luis Fernando de Jesus Santana	Santa Cruz de Goiás	Goiás
Valdemar Marciano Guajajara	Amarante do Maranhão	Maranhão
Raimundo Ribeiro da Silva	Arame	Maranhão
José Alberto Moreno Mendes	ltaipuaçu- Mirim	Maranhão
Rufino Velasque	Aral Moreira Mato Grosso	
Sebastiana Gauto	Aral Moreira Mato Grosso	
Damiana Cavanha	Dourados Mato Gros	
Alisson Lacerda Abreu	São João das Missões Minas Ge	
Agnaldo da Silva (Turiwara)	Acará Pará	
Lindomar Dias de Souza	São Félix do Xingu Pará	
Aldecy Viturino Barros	Princesa Isabel	Paraíba
Ana Paula Costa Silva	Princesa Isabel Paraíba	
Josimar da Silva Pereira	Vitória de Santo Antão	Pernambuco
Raniel Barbosa Laurindo	Porto Velho	Rondônia
Rodrigo Hawerroth	Porto Velho	Rondônia

José Carlos dos Santos	Theobroma	Rondônia
Angelita Prororita Yanomami	Boa Vista	Roraima
Ilson Xiriana	Mucajaí	Roraima
Venâncio Xirixana	Mucajaí	Roraima

In 7 situations, two people were murdered on the same occasion.

Human rights defenders murdered in 2024

Victim's name	Municipality of violation	State
Antônio da Silva Alves (Tonhão)	Novo Lino	Alagoas
Jorrana Patrícia da Silva	Macapá	Amapá
Nildo Costa Moreira	Macapá	Amapá
Arlindo Firmino de Brito	Condeúba	Bahia
Mariene Lima	Itabela	Bahia
Maria Fátima Muniz de Andrade (Nega Pataxó)	Potiraguá	Bahia
Lucas Cruz de Jesus (Duduka)	Serrinha	Bahia
Geraldo Barbosa da Silva Filho Tapeba	Caucaia	Ceará
Raimundo Bertoldo	Capinzal do Norte	Maranhão
Melquisedeque Gomes da Silva (Melk do Mutirão)	Timbiras	Maranhão
Neri Ramos da Silva (Guarani Kaiowá)	Antônio João	Mato Grosso do Sul

Algimiro Escarlate (Rezador Algimiro)	Bela Vista	Mato Grosso do Sul
Merong Kamakã Mongoió	Brumadinho	Minas Gerais
Zaqueu Fernandes Baileiro	Gameleiras	Minas Gerais
Alana de Jesus	Matozinhos	Minas Gerais
Orlando Alves dos Santos	Itupiranga	Pará
Ademi Ferreira Ribeiro (Baiano)	Jacundá	Pará
Adão Rodrigues de Sousa	Marabá	Pará
Edson Silva e Silva	Marabá	Pará
José Roberto da Rocha	Alhandra	Paraíba
Iracema Correia dos Santos	Pinhão Paran	
Rosimere Bizzaria da Silva Barbosa	Angelim	Pernambuco
Edivaldo Pereira dos Santos	Itambé Pernambu	
Marcos Antônio (Marquinhos dos Sem-teto)	Jaboatão dos Pernambu Guararapes	
Hariel Paliano	Itaiópolis Santa Catarin	
Sidiney de Oliveira Silva	Formoso do Araguaia	Tocantins
Cícero Rodrigues de Lima	Nova Olinda Tocantins	

It is important to mention that the number of murders of human rights defenders could be even higher. This data collection did not include four cases of murder in which there is evidence that the victims were human rights defenders, as it was not possible to find the names of these people. Identifying the names of murder victims is important to be able to find out more information about the victim's history of defending rights, and it is also essential for public recognition of their work.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MURDERS

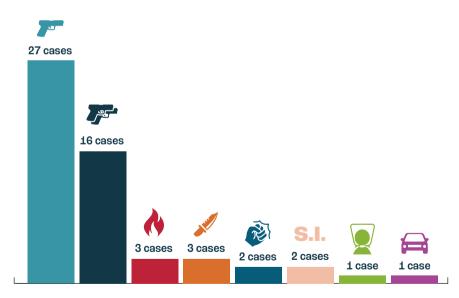


Of the **55** murders accounted for, **37** took place within the victim's territory or place of residence. The other cases were registered mainly in public environments, such as on roads (while the defenders were traveling), and even during leisure time, such as in bars or at soccer matches.

Regarding the method used, firearms were used in 78,2% of the murders.

METHOD USED FOR MURDER









Set someone on fire



Beating



Asphyxiation



Multiple gunshot



Stab



No information



Vehicular Homicide

Organized crime ————	9	
Jagunço (Thug) or gunman ———	5	
Military Police —————	5	
Civil Police —————	2	
Prospector ————	2	
Farmer ————	1	
Company ————	1	
Other private perpetrator* —	17	
No information —————	13	

^{*}Another private perpetrator was considered when it was not possible to specify the aggressor, but there was a mention in the articles that it was a private subject. For example: land invaders, investors in land for real estate speculation, etc.

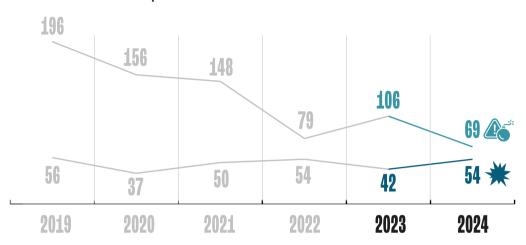


THREATS AND ATTEMPTS ON ONE'S LIFE





175 threats and 96 attempts on one's life accounted for between 2023 and 2024





Threats



Attempt on one's life

Even though it is the most prevalent form of violence, in 2024, threats fell by 34.9% compared to 2023. However, the number of attempts on one's life increased by **28,6**% in the same period. Considering that attempts on one's life are related to assassination attempts, the number of deaths could be even higher if these attacks had been successful in their intent.

Compared to the annual average number of cases in the first edition, the current data collection registered a 40% drop in threats. In contrast, the average number of attacks remained relatively unchanged.

Average number of threats

- ▶ 1st edition: 144.75 threats per year
- > 2nd edition: 87.5 threats per year



Average number of attempts

- ▶ 1st edition: 49.25 attempts per year
- > 2nd edition: 48 attempts per year



Threats and intimidation

The threats against those who defend human rights are varied. They range from subtle intimidation to more explicit actions, such as approaching people or sending messages and notes.

Also noteworthy are the threats made against human rights defenders in a digital environment, a fact registered in at least 28 situations identified in the data collection. In 18 of these cases, the threats were made via email, 7 on social media, and 3 through messaging apps.



In 28 cases, the threats were made in a digital environment.

Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes a rights defender and well-known activist for ending violence against women, was one of the victims of this type of violence. In 2024, she began to receive threats on social media from far-right groups and so-called red pills, a term used to define groups of men who use the internet to defend male supremacy and are misogynistic.

In addition to threats in digital environments, it is also important to note that a broader examination of the cases reveals the use of technologies for surveillance and intimidation of human rights defenders. This is the case, for example, with the **Nova Aliança Camp**, in the municipality of Senador José Porfírio (PA). The camp was formed in 2022 to prevent the devastation that would be caused by the Volta Grande project, of the Canadian mining company Belo Sun, which wants the site to be the largest open-pit gold mine in the country. A news report by Agência Pública revealed that security guards from Invictus, Belo Sun's outsourced property security company, are spying on the camp, using photographs and videos from cameras and drones¹⁷.

^{17.} Agência Pública. *Armed security guards use drones to monitor and denounce landless people at Belo Sun and Belo Monte.* Available at: https://apublica.org/2023/09/segurancas-armados-usam-drones-para-vigiar-e-denunciar-sem-terra-em-belo-sun-e-belo-monte/.

AMEAÇAS E A FALTA DE REGULARIZAÇÃO FUNDIÁRIA

The violence associated with land conflicts shows that, without concrete progress in regularizing territories, these situations tend to persist and worsen. In the Gleba Lago Grande Agro-Extractivist Settlement Project (PAE) in the municipality of Santarém, Pará (PA), the delay in collective titling has left the territory vulnerable to loggers, land grabbers, and mining companies. Approved by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) in 2005 and recognized by the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) in 2008, PAE Lago Grande is one of the largest environmentally differentiated settlements in Brazil, home to around 35,000 people spread over 155 riverside and indigenous communities.

The resistance of local leaders in the face of threats has resulted in persecution and intimidation. **Darlon Neres**, a leader of the Guardiões do Bem Viver (Guardians of the Good Life) youth group — which works to defend the territory — was constantly threatened to the point where he had to leave the region for safety. It is estimated that at least 20 leaders in the territory are being threatened.

In an interview with Agência Pública in 2024, Darlon highlighted the need to regularize the territory's land ownership. "Our biggest dream is the collective titling of the PAE. And what's missing to make that happen? There is a lack of willingness on the part of the authorities, because the PAE was created 19 years ago, and we do not have access to the public policies that INCRA, the federal government, should be implementing, such as agrarian reform policies, due to a lack of title deeds." ¹¹⁸

18. Brasil de Fato. *In Pará, extractivists in settlements suffer harassment and threats due to government inaction.* Available on August 23, 2024. Available at: https://apublica.org/2024/08/no-para-extrativistas-em-assentamento-sofrem-assedio-e-ameacas-por-inacao-do-governo/.

Attempts on one's life

In 84 cases, the attempts took place in the area where the human rights defender worked or lived, representing 87.5% of the total. This data reinforces the importance of considering protection approaches that incorporate the territorial and collective dimension. Attempts are repeatedly carried out by armed and hooded groups and are often not one-off actions, but events that are repeated over time. In several episodes, the aggressors return to the territory, shooting at homes. In these situations, the target is not necessarily an individual; the action is aimed at the community, with the goal of destabilizing the community's organization and weakening its struggle for rights.

Indigenous peoples are among the main targets of registered attacks. Of the 96 cases of this type of violence, 71 involved indigenous people. Most of these attacks took place after actions to retake traditional territories, as happened with the Guarani Kaiowá people in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. In July 2024, after retaking part of the territory corresponding to the Panambi-Lagoa Rica Indigenous Land, in the municipality of Douradina (MS), the indigenous people were the target of a series of attacks. At the time, videos of threats made by farmers circulated on social media. The National Force was called in, but new attacks were registered just a few days after its withdrawal. In less than 24 hours, armed groups using pick-up trucks carried out two attacks using lethal ammunition and rubber bullets. 11 indigenous people were injured, two of them seriously. The process of demarcating the area has been stalled since 2011.

Attacks on structures

In at least 44 cases, the attacks targeted the physical structures of communities or collectivities. Although not all of them pose an immediate risk to people's physical integrity, these attacks cause significant material, moral, spiritual, and psychological damage. This can be seen, for example, in the burning of prayer houses—as in the

^{19.} Brasil de Fato. Farmers carry out two armed attacks and injure 11 indigenous people in Mato Grosso do Sul: 'more will surely happen', warns leader. Published on August 5, 2024. Available at: https://www.brasil-defato.com.br/2024/08/05/fazendeiros-fazem-dois-ataques-armados-e-ferem-11-indigenas-no-ms-com-certeza-vai-acontecer-mais-alerta-lideranca.

case that occurred in February 2024 in the Kunumi Verá territory of the Guarani Kaiowá people, in Mato Grosso do Sul — or in the destruction of schools and homes, as in the episode registered at the Zé Rosa Camp, of the Landless Workers Movement (MST), in December 2024. And what is missing for this to happen? At the time, a group of men, using a backhoe and escorted by private security guards, demolished the school built by the community and destroyed nine houses in the camp, located in the municipality of Barra de Maxaranguape, on the north coast of Rio Grande do Norte.

Attacks on physical structures constitute a strategy of collective destabilization, aimed at weakening community organization, and signal the willingness of violators to resort to extreme forms of violence to force the illegal removal of populations from these territories.

METHODS USED FOR INTIMIDATION AND THREATS





The use of **pesticides as a chemical weapon** in certain situations was also noted. For years, communities have been reporting the impacts of spraying agricultural poisons near their territories, resulting in the contamination of families, water sour-

ces, and other environments essential to collective life. In recent years, there have been frequent episodes in which pesticides are applied directly to crops and homes in communities, with the intention of causing material damage, contamination, and the forced eviction of families.

A significant case was registered in October 2024, involving the **Avá-Guarani** indigenous community in the municipalities of Guaíra and Terra Roxa, in western Paraná. At the time, tractors, accompanied by pickup trucks and Military Police vehicles, sprayed pesticides on areas cultivated by the indigenous people and near the homes of the Yvyju Avary community. The action was recorded on video and published on social media by the indigenous themselves, who reported symptoms of poisoning among children, such as nausea and gastrointestinal disorders, associated with previous exposure to the same type of attack.

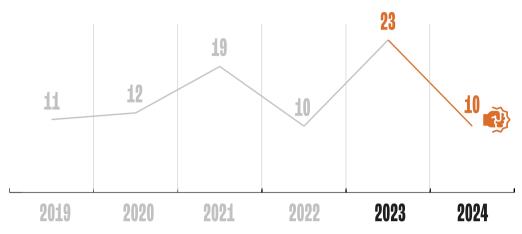
The contamination of Avá-Guarani indigenous territories by the use of pesticides had already been the subject of an international complaint. In April 2024, six organizations from Latin America and Germany—including Terra de Direitos—filed a formal complaint with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) against Bayer, citing the presence of glyphosate residues—a pesticide produced by the company—in water sources in the villages of Y'Hovy, Pohã Renda, and Ocoy²⁰, according to laboratory tests.

Although this data collection does not enable the specification of the total number of cases involving the use of pesticides as an instrument of violence, it is a piece of data that should be further studied and systematized in future editions of the survey.

^{20.} Terra de Direitos. Latin American organizations denounce Bayer to the OECD for systematic human rights violations. Available at: https://terradedireitos.org.br/noticias/noticias/organizacoes-da-america-latina-denunciam-bayer-a-ocde-por-sistematica-violacao-dos-direitos-humanos/24005.

PHYSICAL AGGRESSION





The second edition of this data collection accounted for 33 cases of physical aggression, with an average of 16.5 cases per year, surpassing the annual average of the first edition, which was 13 cases.

It should be noted that, in several episodes, the acts classified as physical aggression go beyond the crime of bodily injury, taking on more serious and systematic characteristics. In at least 20 cases analyzed in this edition, evidence of the use of torture methods in the violence was identified. In 10 of these cases, the agents responsible were police officers.

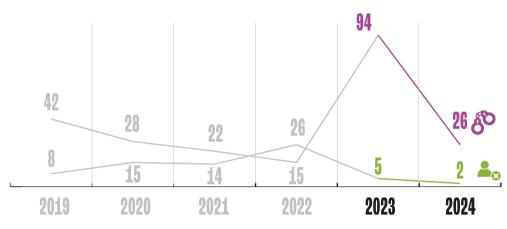
A representative episode occurred in early 2023, involving a deliveryman and anti-fascist activist **Paulo Roberto Lima**, **known as Galo**. The human rights defender reported on social media that he had been beaten and subjected to torture by civil police officers at a police station in São Paulo, after being approached for driving a motorcycle without a helmet. According to his report, he was taken to the police station, beaten, and had one of his arms burned.

Paulo Roberto Lima became widely known in 2021 after being indicted for participating in a political demonstration that aimed to set fire to the statue of Borba Gato in São Paulo. This action was part of a movement critical of historical figures associated with violence and oppression. After the episode, he and his family began to suffer harassment and threats. The repression included the preventive detention of his wife, Géssica Barbosa, a measure that at the time was harshly criticized by civil society organizations and human rights bodies.



Criminalization

CRIMINALIZATION AND DELEGITIMIZATION



Delegitimization

With 120 cases accounted for, criminalization became the second most recurrent type of violence against those who defend human rights in this second edition. In 45 of these cases, the defenders were detained or arrested.

In this study, criminalization is understood in a broad sense, encompassing the use of institutional mechanisms—in the civil, criminal, or administrative spheres—aimed at imposing sanctions or attributing crimes in a retaliatory manner to individuals or groups acting in defense of human rights. This practice aims to delegitimize and restrict the actions of these individuals through the justice system and other state institutions.

Examples of this include the attempted removal from office of six federal representatives who protested against the Lei do Marco Temporal (Temporary Framework bill)²¹,

21. Approved by Congress in September 2023, Law14,701 instituted the ruralist legal thesis that the demarcation of indigenous lands applies only to areas occupied by the original peoples until October 5, 1988, the date of the promulgation of the Federal Constitution, disregarding the processes of expulsion and forced displacement. The measure was approved after the STF rejected it, by 9 votes to 2, in the judgment of Extraordinary Appeal (RE) 1017365, with general repercussion (Theme 1,031).

accused of breach of decorum²², and the installation of the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPI) against the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), also in 2023²³. The CPI ended without voting on a report or presenting evidence of a crime, but it did act as an instrument of pressure and public exposure against the movement.

The intensification of criminalization cases indicates that the strategies of violence and attack against human rights defenders adapt to the political and social context. This phenomenon is also observed in other monitoring. The report Violence against journalists and press freedom in Brazil," produced by the Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas [National Federation of Journalists] (FENAJ)²⁴ registered the lowest number of attacks on journalists and communicators in the last six years in 2024 — the highest number of occurrences was registered during Jair Bolsonaro's government. Despite the reduction, the study warns of changes in the types of violence, with an emphasis on so-called judicial violence. In this data collection, judicial harassment appeared as the second most recurrent type of violence in 2024, accounting for almost 16% of cases.

The drop in the number of threats and the increase in cases of criminalization indicate that, in the new context, violators are seeking to sophisticate intimidation against human rights defenders with an air of legality. They use the justice system and administrative mechanisms to try to punish, delegitimize, and intimidate these people and movements, in an attempt to demobilize and weaken the fight for rights. It is a strategy especially adopted by companies and public officials.

^{22.} The Liberal Party presented the representation to the Council of Ethics and Parliamentary Behavior against representatives Célia Xakriabá (Psol-MG), Sâmia Bomfim (Psol-SP), Talíria Petrone (Psol-RJ), Erika Kokay (PT-DF), Fernanda Melchionna (Psol-RS), and Juliana Cardoso (PT-SP). Read more: Agência Câmara dos Deputados. Ethics Council appoints rapporteurs for cases of breach of decorum against six deputies. Available at: https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/970783-CONSELHO-DE-ETICA-SORTEIA-RELATORES-DE-PROCESSOS-POR-QUEBRA-DE-DECORO-CONTRA-SEIS-DEPUTADAS.

^{23.} Read more: Brasil de Fato. *MST CPI ends with Salles' defeat and reveals the 'failure of the far-right.'* Available at: https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2023/09/27/cpi-do-mst-acaba-com-derrota-de-salles-e-escancara-fracasso-da-extrema-direita/.

^{24.} FEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS JORNALISTAS. Violence against journalists and press freedom in Brazil. Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas (Fenaj), May 2025. Available at: https://fenaj.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Relatorio-da-Violencia-2024.pdf.

An expressive example of this pattern can be seen in the case of the Belo Sun mining company, which sought to criminalize around 40 human rights defenders in Pará in a single action. Even if these episodes were not counted, the total number of incidents of criminalization registered in this edition would still be high and higher than in the first edition of the data collection.

The process of criminalizing human rights and environmental defenders in Brazil has intensified, especially in contexts marked by large extractive enterprises such as mining. This practice often takes the form of lawsuits, delegitimization campaigns, and institutional embarrassment, which companies promote to silence critical voices and contain social mobilizations that denounce rights violations and socio-environmental impacts.

These practices demonstrate a strategic use of the law to restrict fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, demonstration, and collective organization, resulting in forms of procedural harassment and predatory litigation that aim to discourage and neutralize the actions of individuals and communities defending their rights.

THE BELO SUN CASE

which the Volta Grande Project, Belo Sun Mineração Ltda., a subsidiary of Canada's Belo Sun Mining Corp., intends to install Brazil's largest open-pit gold mine on the Volta Grande do Xingu, a stretch of one of the Amazon's most important rivers in southwestern Pará. The project has been under development since 2012 in the municipality of Senador José Porfírio, bordering Altamira, in a region already marked by serious impacts from the Belo Monte hydroelectric plant.

The case²⁵ is a significant example of the criminalization of human rights and environmental defenders. In October 2023, Belo Sun filed criminal charges against approximately 30 to 40 people—including small farmers from the Nova Aliança Camp,

25. Justiça Global. *Belo Sun mining company tries to criminalize human rights defenders in the Volta Grande do Xingu*. Available at: https://www.global.org.br/blog/18597-2/.

community leaders, researchers, and members of civil society organizations—accusing them of "possessory disturbance," or illegal appropriation of land.

The action targeted people who denounced the irregular appropriation of public land transferred to the company by INCRA, the transfer of which is being questioned in a Public Civil Action filed by the Public Defenders since 2022. The criminal complaint included measures such as requests for imprisonment, the blocking of bank accounts, and the breach of financial secrecy, showing the intimidating nature of the initiative.

In March 2025, the judge of the Individual Court of Senador José Porfírio (PA) ordered the dismissal of the criminal case, recognizing that there were insufficient legal grounds for the charges. The decision was considered a victory for the accused defenders, who were exercising their legitimate right to criticize and defend their territory²⁶.

26. Judge dismisses *Belo Sun's criminal complaint against farmers and social movements in the Xingu region.* Available at: https://www.global.org.br/blog/juiz-extingue-queixa-crime-da-mineradora-belo-sun-contra-agricultores-e-movimentos-sociais-no-xingu/

It is important to note that the process of criminalization is not restricted to the legal field. It also includes veiled threats, surveillance, public disqualification, and coercion during hearings and consultations. This set of actions constitutes a pattern of indirect repression that operates within the formal limits of the rule of law, yet has profound impacts on the social and political fabric of the affected communities.

Even when lawsuits don't succeed, their effects are significant: they produce fear, alienate people from collective struggles, and weaken community support networks.

Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need to recognize and protect the role of individuals and groups who work to defend human and environmental rights. The Belo Sun case is not isolated: it reflects a broader pattern of criminalization that cuts across different territories and types of action, as evidenced by this edition of the data collection.

This episode, along with others documented in the report, demonstrates that the sophistication of attack mechanisms, especially those that appear to be legal, requires robust institutional and political responses to guarantee freedom of expression, demonstration, and collective organization, and to ensure that human rights can be defended fully and legitimately.

Delegitimization

Seven cases of delegitimization were identified in this data collection. The number is small, but it reflects the difficulty of registering and that, most of the time, delegitimization is associated with other forms of attack, especially criminalization.

In many cases, criminalization processes begin without there actually being any crimes attributable to the people or organizations accused. Simply making an accusation is a strategy to undermine the credibility of their work.

Systematically capturing cases of delegitimization is also limited by the difficulty of documenting diffuse manifestations, such as comments or social media campaigns. Social movements and rights organizations often face prolonged processes of delegitimization, which are frequently reinforced by the coverage of certain segments of the press, thereby perpetuating stigmas and leading uninformed public opinion to reproduce slander, offenses, and defamation. This is the case, for example, with the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST). The sheer volume of this type of content prevents it from being systematically included in this data collection.

However, episodes in which public figures explicitly spoke out to delegitimize defenders, such as parliamentarians, journalists, and broadcasters, were considered.

One example occurred in 2023, when federal representative Gustavo Gayer (PL-GO) published a video on his YouTube channel, accusing, without proof, non-governmen-

tal organizations (NGOs) of being responsible for the humanitarian crisis affecting the Yanomami indigenous people, especially during Jair Bolsonaro's administration. In the video, Gayer cited the Instituto Socioambiental [Socio-Environmental Institute] (ISA), accusing it of exploiting the Yanomami by selling mushrooms, which he said would take away part of the indigenous people's diet. Through false allegations, the parliamentarian sought to delegitimize an organization with more than 30 years of nationally and internationally recognized work, especially in defense of the rights of indigenous peoples.

DEFENDER PROFILE

Between 2023 and 2024, **318 episodes of violence against human rights defenders** were accounted for, resulting in **486 victims**:

COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL CASES

364 individuals

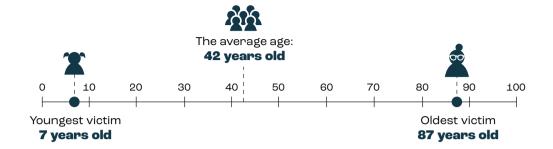


199 collectives



The survey recognizes that a collective can be a human rights defender in its own right, such as grassroots movements and civil society organizations. In the case of collective attacks, the real number of people affected is certainly higher, as it is not always possible to identify all those affected.

AGE OF THE VICTIMS



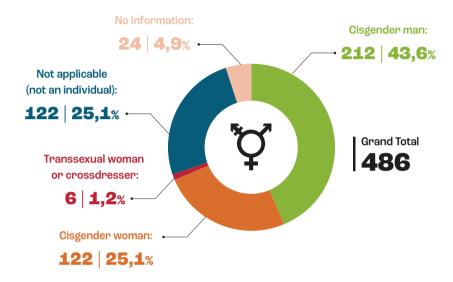
It was possible to identify the age of the victims of the violence accounted for in 139 cases. The average age is 42.

- Youngest victim: a 7-year-old indigenous child, murdered in July 2023 in a shooting attack in the Yanomami Indigenous Land (AM/RR).
 The suspicion is that miners from the region are involved;
- Oldest victim: Ñandesy Tereza Martins, a Guarani Nhandeva elder (MS), who suffered death threats at the age of 87.

It was not possible to identify the age of the victims in 225 cases, and in another 122, the age field was not applied because it was collective violence.

VICTIMS' GENDER IDENTITY

It was possible to identify the gender identity of 340 people using the information provided by the press.



The survey also registered specificities of violence according to gender identity:

- In 4 cases, there was sexual violence (including rape and molestation);
- In 9 cases, there were threats of rape, mainly against lesbian, transgender, or black women;
- Among the 6 trans women or crossdressers who were victims of violence, 2 were murdered.



Color or race

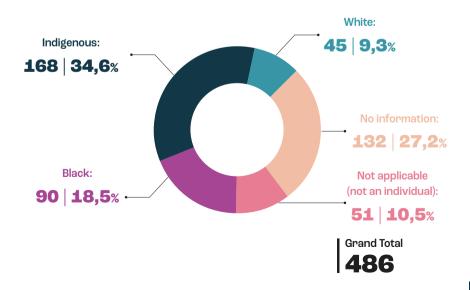
A look at the color or race of the victims shows that indigenous human rights defenders are among the main victims of violence, with 168 records (34.6%). In at least 90 situations (18.5%), black people (considering black and indigenous people, based on the categories of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) were victims, twice the number of reports of violence against white people, which was 45 cases (9.3%).

In 132 cases, it was not possible to specify the color or race of the victims, who were identified by news reports or by hetero-identification when the records contained photos of the people.

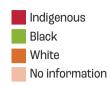
Although the classification by color or race is usually applied to individuals, in this survey, we have chosen to extend this categorization to certain collectives when their constitution is intrinsically linked to a racial identity, as in the case of violence against indigenous peoples and quilombola communities.

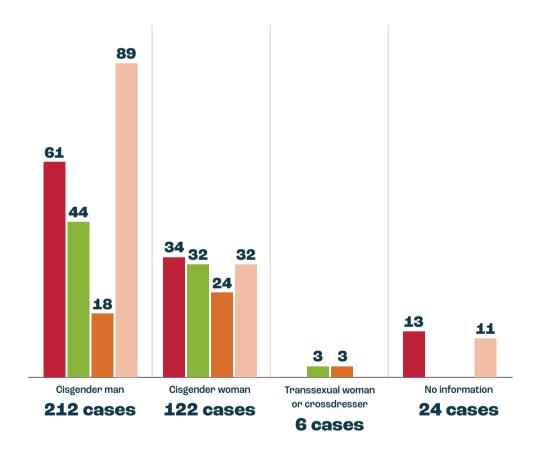
On the other hand, when it comes to groups whose composition does not have an ethnic-racial identity as a constituent element—whether in their self-identification, their organization, or the reason why they are targeted—the category of color or race is registered as "not applicable."

COLOR OR RACE OF THE VICTIMS

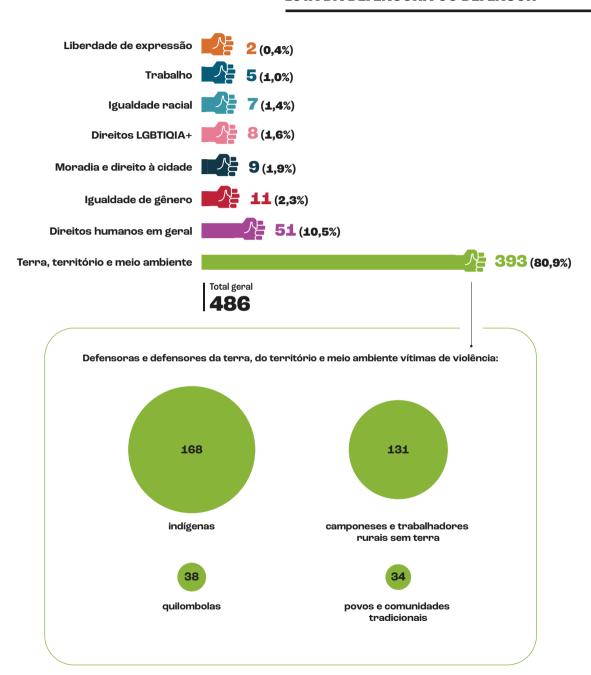


COLOR OR RACE BY GENDER IDENTITY





LUTA DA DEFENSORA OU DEFENSOR



VIOLENCE AGAINST QUILOMBOLAS

etween 2008 and 2022, 70 murders of quilombolas were accounted for in Brazil, according to the first two editions of the survey Racism and Violence against Quilombolas in Brazil, carried out by the National Coordination of the Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (Conaq) and Terra de Direitos.

Updating this scenario, a report published by Conaq in August 2024²⁷ pointed to 46 new murders of quilombolas between January 2019 and July 2024. This brings the total to 88 quilombolas murdered over 17 years. Among the main factors behind this violence are land conflicts and gender-based violence.



27. Instituto Socioambiental. *Killings of Quilombolas - Threats to Quilombola Human Rights Defenders (2019 - 2024).* Available at: https://acervo.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/documents/03d00271 0.pdf.

Fighting for rights in the socio-environmental and climate context

Defenders of land, territory, and the environment are among the main targets of violence. This group comprises indigenous peoples, quilombolas, traditional communities, peasants/rural workers, as well as environmental activists. Their defense of land and territories also involves protecting biodiversity and the environment. For this reason, this study does not distinguish between environmental and territorial defenders, recognizing that these dimensions are inextricably linked.

In the context of the global climate crisis, these defenders also act as climate defenders, as their practices and ways of life, rooted in their territories, contribute to both environmental preservation and the development of strategies for adaptation and

mitigation of climate change at both local and global levels. Often, these groups are located in areas that are also more vulnerable to the crisis's effects.

The fact that more than **80%** of the registered cases of violence target people and collectivities engaged in defending the land and the environment reveals the special vulnerability of these groups, who are on the front line of confronting the climate crisis

Thus, the regularization and protection of their territories also acts as a barrier to the advance of predatory and polluting activities, such as deforestation, mining, livestock farming, and agribusiness, sectors that are among the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in Brazil. In this sense, defending their territorial rights is an essential strategy for combating the climate crisis.

Social movements

42 human rights defenders who were victims of violence were members of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST).

When analyzing the social movements and collectives to which the rights defenders who were victims of violence were linked, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) stands out, with at least 42 members who were victims of violence for defending the right to land. Among the rural movements, cases were also registered against members of the League of Poor Peasants (LCP), the Movimento dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras do Campo [Rural Workers' Movement] (MTC), and the Movimento Terra Livre (Free Land Movement). Of the urban movements, cases were registered against the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST), the Movimento de Luta dos Trabalhadores Independentes [Independent Workers' Struggle Movement] (MLTI), the United Street Vendors Movement (Muca), the National Movement of Struggle for Housing (MNLM), and the Movimento Popular pela Moradia Digna [People's Movement for Decent Housing] (MPMD).

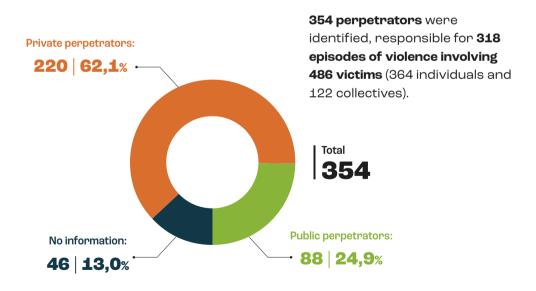
Violence was also registered against defenders of other types of struggle, particularly activists for gender equality, the right to the city and housing, and LGBTQIAP+ activists.

Political violence

In at least **36 identified cases** the violence against human rights defenders was politically motivated. These are people who, in addition to defending rights, hold office or have run for office in city halls or parliaments. For this reason, they became targets of threats, attacks, assaults, and murders—as happened in two cases identified in the survey. In these situations, motivation is directly linked to the agendas they defend. Participating in elections increases their exposure and vulnerability, since holding municipal, state, or federal office strengthens their capacity to act and expands the reach of the agendas they represent.

The study *Political and Electoral Violence in Brazil*²⁸, now in its third edition and produced by Justiça Global and Terra de Direitos, points out that political violence has increased significantly in recent years. In 2016, the year the data collection began, 46 cases were reported. In 2024, there was a jump to 558 cases.

PERPETRATOR OF THE VIOLATION



28. Terra de Direitos. *Political and Electoral Violence in Brazil - Overview of human rights violations between November 1, 2022 and October 27, 2024.* Available at: https://terradedireitos.org.br/violencia-politica-e-eleitoral-no-brasil/.

The number of perpetrators exceeds the number of episodes of violence, as there may be more than one perpetrator involved in the same situation. In most cases, it was not possible to identify the perpetrator precisely.

Among the perpetrators, more than 60% are private perpetrators, while almost 25% are public perpetrators.

PRIVATE PERPETRATORS

Main private actors responsible for violence

Main private perpetrators	Number of cases		
Jagunço(Thug)/Gunman	—— 42	13,2%	
Farmer —	35 	11%	
Company —	18	5,7 %	
Private security ————	14	4,4%	
Organized crime ————	12	3,8%	
Other private perpetrator*	— 99	31	L ,1 %

^{*} Category that includes other perpetrators, such as land grabbers, local business people, neighbors, or unidentified intermediaries.

The main private perpetrators include thugs and gunmen (who appear in 42 episodes of violence) and private security (14 episodes). However, it is not possible to identify those responsible for hiring armed private security guards. Farmers and companies are also important perpetrators of violence, participating in at least 35 and 18 episodes of violence, respectively. In four cases, off-duty police officers hired as private security guards were found to be involved.

^{**} Calculation of the proportion of participation of each category of private perpetrator within the 318 episodes of violence accounted for, even though different types of private perpetrators may be part of the same episode.

In 12 cases, it was possible to identify organized crime as responsible for the violence

A smaller number of cases were also identified in which the perpetrators of the violence were loggers, miners, broadcasters, and journalists, for example.

PUBLIC PERPETRATORS

Main public perpetrators responsible for the violence

Main public perpetrators	Number of cases		
Military Police	45		14,2%
Other public perpetrator*	9	2,8%	
Civil Police —	8	2,5%	
Representative ———	7	2,2%	
Judiciary ————	6	1,9%	
Mayor —	—— 4	1,3%	
Councilor —	—— 4	1,3 %	
Municipal Guard ———	3	0,9%	
Federal Police ————	2	0,6%	

^{*}Other perpetrators, such as military firefighters, municipal secretaries, and civil servants, etc.

^{**} Calculation of the proportion of participation of each category of public perpetrator within the 318 episodes of violence accounted for, even though different types of public perpetrators may be part of the same episode.

The police (military, civil, and federal) and municipal guards were involved in 18% of the episodes of violence against human rights defenders registered. In other words, for every 10 episodes of violence against these people or groups, almost two are committed by public security forces.

MURDER, CRIMINALIZATION, AND TORTURE IN OPERATION FORTIS STATUS

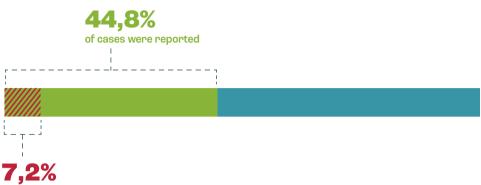
n October 2024, the Pará Civil Police launched Operation Fortis Status on the Mutamba farm in Marabá, on the grounds of investigating allegations of environmental crimes attributed to the Terra Prometida Rural Association. Rural workers were accused of illegal timber trading, cattle rustling, and other offenses, but none of these charges were proven on the spot.

Even without evidence, the operation was conducted violently, resulting in the death of two workers — Adão Rodrigues de Sousa and Edson Silva e Silva. In addition to the murders, four settlers were arrested, and others reported being tortured. The police claim to have been shot at, alleging that the deaths occurred in a confrontation. However, nine months on, there is no conclusive evidence to support the agents' version.

The pattern observed in this operation is similar to other episodes of lethal violence in Pará, notably two cases that occurred in the state: the **Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre** in 1996, which resulted in the deaths of 21 rural workers, and the **Pau D'Arco Massacre**, in 2017, when 10 rural workers were killed while executing warrants at the Santa Lúcia Farm.

As in these cases, Operation Fortis Status highlights a worrying trend registered in this report: the criminalization of social movements. More than that, it shows how this process serves as a catalyst for other serious violations, such as torture and the murder of human rights defenders.

REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

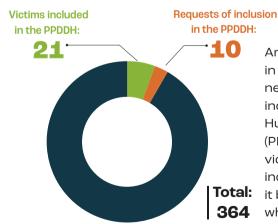


of cases had measures registered against the perpetrator

Of the **218** cases (**44**,**8**%) in which violence was reported to the authorities, in only **35** (**less than 10**%) did the news indicate that any measure had been registered against the perpetrator, such as preventive detention, search and seizure warrants, or removal from office.

This figure reveals a mismatch between the seriousness of the violence and the state's capacity to offer adequate responses. The low effectiveness of investigations and accountability measures weakens the trust of victims and groups in institutional mechanisms.

PROTECTION



Among the **364 individual victims**, in only **21 cases** (**4,3%**) did the news report that they had been included in the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PPDDH), and in the other **10** the victims had requested to be included in the program, without it being possible to identify whether or not they had already been included.

GENERAL ANALYSIS

I. 20 years of the PPDDH: achievements and challenges of state protection

In 2024, the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists (PPDDH) celebrated its 20th anniversary. The PPDDH is the result of a working group created by Ordinances No. 66 and 89, of May 12 and June 27, 2003, of the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, in the first months of the first term of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, with the purpose of outlining public policy for the protection of human rights defenders in Brazil. Justiça Global and Terra de Direitos were among the civil society organizations that participated in the formulation of this public policy.

The then Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders was officially launched on October 26, 2004, by Nilmário Miranda, minister of the Special Secretariat for Human Rights at the time, with initial operations in the states of Espírito Santo, Pará, and Pernambuco, as well as a federal team to provide assistance in the other federal units

Although the state's responsibility and urgency to protect people who put their lives at risk to defend their rights seems obvious, over the course of two decades, the program has undergone significant changes through the issuing of new decrees. These changes range from the incorporation of communicators and environmentalists into its nomenclature to the very conceptual definition of human rights defenders, which further reduced the scope of the definition by removing the protection of collectivities. Unfortunately, most of these changes have favored the weakening of public policy, to the detriment of its strengthening.

On April 27, 2016, for example, then-President Dilma Rousseff signed Decree No. 8,724, which established the Deliberative Council of the PPDDH, thereby extinguishing the then-existing National Coordination, without providing for social participation in the new model. For eight years, Brazilian civil society fought with the government for social participation in the Deliberative Council of the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PPDDH) to be resumed - which only happened with the publication of Decree No. 11,867 of December 27, 2023, which guaranteed parity between the state and civil society in the composition of the Deliberative Council.

On August 20, 2024, civil society councillors were sworn in, elected for the 2024-2025 biennium, representing the organizations: Justiça Global, Terra de Direitos, Sociedade Maranhense de Direitos Humanos, Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), National Coordination of the Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (CONAQ), Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), and Repórteres Sem Fronteiras.

The PPDDH is currently implemented in nine states (Pará, Maranhão, Ceará, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, and Mato Grosso). A federal technical team serves the other states of the federation, regional teams (in Roraima, Amazonas, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Rio de Janeiro), and decentralized teams..

According to data from the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship (MDHC), 1,414 people are under the program's protection²⁹. Of this total, 80% are leaders who defend the environment, land, and territory.

The National Plan for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the establishment of the National Protection System

Submitted to the MDHC on December 12, 2024, the proposal for the National Plan for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PlanoDDH) is the result of a court order from the Federal Regional Court of the 4th Region (TRF4), in response to a lawsuit filed by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, and the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Sales Pimenta Case³⁰. However, first and foremost, it is a historic demand by social movements and human rights organizations that have accompanied and contributed to the strengthening of public policy for the protection of human rights defenders. This demand has been pending resolution since 2007.

^{29.} Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship. *MDHC protects 1,414 human rights and environmental defenders who are under threat.* Available at: https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2025/julho/mdhc-mantem-1-414-defensores-de-direitos-humanos-e-do-meio-ambiente-que-estao-sob-ameaca-em-programa-de-protecao

^{30.} In 2022, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights declared the Federative Republic of Brazil internationally responsible for violating the rights to judicial guarantees and judicial protection and the right to the truth, as a result of its failure to investigate the violent death of Gabriel Sales Pimenta. A lawyer for rural workers and human rights defender, he was murdered in 1982 in Marabá (PA). The

The PlanoDDH is an instrument that guides the programmatic action of the National Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PNPDDH). Together with the Protection Programs (PPDDH), it forms part of the National Protection System (SNPDDH).

The construction of the PlanoDDH was conducted by the Sales Pimenta Technical Working Group (TWG), created by Decree No. 11,562 of June 13, 2023, with equal membership between civil society and the state. To develop the plan, the TWG conducted a series of public hearings to gather input from civil society and representatives of public institutions.

The proposal submitted to the MDHC consists of 25 strategic objectives, divided into three axes:

- **1.** State protection: protection measures adopted by the Brazilian state to guarantee the safety and physical and psychological integrity of defenders:
- **2.** Popular Protection: strengthening the strategies developed by civil society, defining actions to encourage them by the federal government;
- **3.** Access to Rights and Combating Impunity: providing for measures directly related to the Justice and Public Security Systems, providing full access to rights for rights defenders, and holding violating agents accountable for violence committed against human rights defenders.

In each axis, the programmatic actions specify targets, indicators, responsible individuals, deadlines, and periodicity.

The TWG also had the task of drafting a bill to institutionalize the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (SNPDDH), which will implement, monitor, and ensure the execution of the National Plan, as well as define the attributions of state entities at various levels.

murderer, landowner Nelito Cardoso, was convicted but remained on the run until the statute of limitations expired. More in: Corte IDH (IA Court). Case of Sales Pimenta Vs. Brasil. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of June 30, 2022. Available at: https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/resumen_454_por.pdf.

Despite the MDHC's commitment to publish the plan as a presidential decree in mid-April 2025, following the delivery of the PlanoDDH, the process has faced obstacles, and its implementation has not yet occurred. The civil society organizations involved in the process anticipate that the publication will take place in the second half of the year.

It is also up to the federal government to guarantee the establishment of the PlanoDDH Monitoring Committee, with equal representation between the state and civil society, and to send the draft bill establishing the National System for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders to Congress, as well as negotiations to ensure that it is approved as soon as possible.

II. The advance of organized crime in the context of the struggle for the rights to land, territory, and the environment

The advance of agribusiness and mining, coupled with the absence of land regularization, titling, and demarcation, as well as the lack of effective public policies, creates a highly complex scenario for human rights defenders in their territories. In this context, there is a recurring pattern of violations, including death threats, intimidation, physical and psychological attacks, murders, criminalization of leaders and social movements, among others.

This violence is largely the result of capital's voracity for expropriating territories and exploiting natural resources. In this context, there have been systematic threats to life and environmental devastation by sectors such as agribusiness, mining, international mining companies, logging companies, and companies linked to the production of agricultural commodities, among others.

At the same time, human rights defenders also have to face up to the violence of the public authorities, in many cases through police force that injures, assaults, criminalizes, and kills, or by failing to confront the violence that affects human rights defenders.

In the day-to-day work of our organizations, we have increasingly identified the presence of various organized crime groups that spread fear and intensify, as well as complicate, disputes over and in territories. New and old forms of violence by organized criminal groups in the territories and the curtailment of civil society organizations, leaders, and social movements are overlapping. Based on the data collected, it is evident that these groups have adopted increasingly sophisticated strategies that put the territories and their inhabitants at risk.

This reality is especially evident in the states of the Legal Amazon. The appropriation of portions of the territories of traditional, riverside, indigenous, and quilombola peoples by criminal groups (miners, loggers, drug traffickers, etc.) is yet another form of expropriation of Amazonian heritage.

Organized crime infiltrates these territories through different channels and for different purposes, such as the use of clandestine routes for drug and arms trafficking in remote areas of the Amazon, the financing and protection of illegal gold mining, illegal logging, illegal fishing, the activities of rural militias linked to land grabbing and agribusiness, as well as the recruitment of young indigenous people and riverside communities. The advance of these groups is targeting the Amazonian borders and the legal and illegal markets already established in the region. In this scenario, the pressure on traditional peoples becomes even more critical, especially in the face of state delays in demarcating, titling, and regularizing their territories.

Pará stands out as a central route state for international drug trafficking. Data from the Mãe Crioula Institute (IMC) and the Brazilian Public Security Forum (FBSP) indicate that, among the 178 locations in the Amazon where criminal factions have been identified, 52 are located in Pará³¹. The municipality of Barcarena (PA), for example, has been strongly impacted by the activities of factions such as the Comando Vermelho (CV) and the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), whose territorial dispute has even led to the forced displacement of residents to urban centers³².

The growing links between drug trafficking, logging, and illegal mining have created an even more complex challenge for indigenous, quilombola, and riverside communities, who are increasingly living under threats, attacks, and murders. From the

^{31.} Nexo Jornal. *The expansion of the criminal faction network in Pará*. Published on 05/08/2025. Available at: https://www.nexojornal.com.br/externo/2025/05/08/faccoes-criminosas-para-expansao.

^{32.} InfoAmazônia. *Factions threaten quilombola communities in the Amazon's 'Cocaine Corridor'*. Published on 08/24/2023. Available at: https://infoamazonia.org/2023/08/24/faccoes-ameacam-comunida-des-quilombolas-no-corredor-da-cocaina-da-amazonia/.

cases monitored, new forms of action were observed, such as the hiring of lawyers by criminal organizations to influence judicial decisions, interfere in disputes over territories, and ensure influence over public and private agents, as well as against leaders and residents of these territories.

The presence of these criminal groups directly threatens the lives of communities and contributes to concealing the political motivation of the violations committed against defenders. In many cases, these violations are treated as interpersonal or local conflicts, removing the political character of the struggle for rights. This is the case in the Rio Gregório Indigenous Land³³, in Acre, on the border with Peru, and a strategic trafficking route. The news about the conflicts in the territory deals with the dynamics of violence between indigenous people and drug traffickers, almost always without mentioning its main catalyst: the dispute over land occupation.

Another worrying aspect is the selective and sometimes complicit action of the state, which sometimes participates in the economic activities associated with these illegal groups, contributing to the exploitation of territories in terms of economics, energy, politics, and minerals. It is important to note that this reality is not restricted to the Amazon region.

In January 2024, in Bahia, indigenous leader Fátima Muniz de Andrade, known as Nega Pataxó, was murdered. The attack was carried out by around 200 farmers from the self-titled Invasão Zero Movement during the retaking of the Inhuma Farm in the municipality of Potiraguá, in southern Bahia, in an area claimed by the Pataxó Hã Hãe as traditional territory. According to survivors, the Military Police witnessed the attack and even facilitated the gunmen's access to the area.

Faced with the complexity of this context, it is necessary to encourage analysis that takes into account local perspectives and experiences, articulated with networks in other territories, and which enables us to broaden our understanding of the dynamics of violence. Furthermore, it is essential that public managers and civil society explicitly consider the activities of criminal organizations related to drug trafficking as a central risk factor for human rights defenders in the territory.

^{33.} Amazônia Real. Federal Police investigate allegations of threats from a criminal faction on indigenous land in Acre. Published on 11/28/2024. Available at: https://amazoniareal.com.br/policia-federal-investiga-denuncias-de-ameacas-de-faccao-criminosa-em-terra-indigena-do-acre/.

The most effective way to combat organized crime in the Amazon and in indigenous, quilombola, and traditional territories across the country requires coordination between agencies such as the National Indigenous Peoples Foundation (Funai), the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama), the Federal Police, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Armed Forces, environmental agencies, and ministries. It also requires: investments in intelligence to dismantle trafficking networks, illegal mining and logging, and arms trafficking; blocking illicit products from entering the formal market; effective protection for human rights defenders and their communities; and, above all, investigating and holding public and private actors involved in criminal activities accountable, in accordance with the law.

III. Indigenous peoples: resisting the violence of the bullet and the pen

Indigenous human rights defenders make up the largest group of victims of the violence documented in this report. 168 cases were accounted for, out of a total of 486 systematized. This group is not only the victim of murders, threats, attempts on one's life, physical aggression, criminalization, and delegitimization, but also specific forms of violence and dehumanization. It is therefore important to highlight in this report, in addition to the direct attacks, the legal and institutional setbacks that threaten the rights of indigenous peoples and fuel the predatory exploitation of their territories. These setbacks are not disconnected from the violence registered. They are often the driving force behind them.

Law No. 14,701 of 2023, known as Temporary Framework³⁴, is exemplary in this regard. It is a ruralist legal thesis that limits the demarcation of indigenous lands to those occupied by indigenous peoples on the date of promulgation of the Federal Constitution in October 1988, disregarding the historical processes of expulsions

34. Formulated by Minister Carlos Alberto Menezes Direito and endorsed by Minister Carlos Ayres Britto, the legal thesis of the Temporary Framework arose in 2009, in the judgment of Petition No. 3388-4, a class action lawsuit seeking the annulment of Ordinance No. 534 of the Ministry of Justice, ratified by the Presidency of the Republic on April 15, 2005, on the demarcation of the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land in Roraima. On March 19 of that year, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the demarcation and immediate removal of the non-indigenous occupants. The vote on the thesis reached the Federal Supreme Court due to the dispute over the Ibirama-Laklãnõ Indigenous Land, in Santa Catarina, inhabited by the Xokleng, Guarani, and Kaingang peoples, in Extraordinary Appeal (RE) 1,017,365, with general repercussion (Theme 1,031).

and forced removals. The approval of the law by Congress in 2023, contrary to the decision of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) – which, in that same year, had declared the thesis unconstitutional – highlights the political strength of the ruralist caucus in the current legislature and its proactive role in creating provisions contrary to the guarantee of indigenous rights.

After the Temporary Framework was sanctioned, several lawsuits were filed with the Supreme Court, both to question its constitutionality and to defend it. Given the lack of consensus, the Supreme Court ordered a nationwide suspension of legal proceedings on the issue until a definitive ruling is made. In April 2024, minister Gilmar Mendes established a Special Commission for Self-Composition, comprising representatives from the federal, state, and municipal governments, as well as civil society³⁵. The measure sought conciliation based on an assumption of parity between the interests involved, i.e., the rights of indigenous peoples and the interests of other sectors of society, such as agribusiness, for example. The construction of an agreement was never desired by the indigenous peoples, who had recently won the declaration that the Temporary Framework was unconstitutional.

The Articulation of Indigenous Peoples (Apib) publicly denounced the institutional violence faced by its representatives at the hearings³⁶ and withdrew from the process. As a result, the STF requested that the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (MPI) appoint new indigenous representatives, thereby allowing the work to continue without the organization's participation.

As the legitimate representative of the indigenous peoples in the process, the absence of APIB at the mediation highlights the fragility of a self-composition procedure that lacks parity between the parties. This scenario transforms the constitutionally guaranteed rights of indigenous peoples into rights that are treated as available and can be negotiated under a strictly patrimonial and civilist logic.

In fact, the mediation conducted by the STF aimed to create a draft bill that would replace Law 14,701/2023, which reintroduces a thesis already declared unconstitutional by the STF itself into the Brazilian legal system. The hearings concluded in

^{35.} STF Agency. *Understand the STF's conciliation hearings on the Temporary Framework law.* Published: 08/08/2024. Available at: https://noticias.stf.jus.br/postsnoticias/entenda-as-audiencias-de-concilia-cao-do-stf-sobre-a-lei-do-marco-temporal/.

^{36.} Apib. Apib considers leaving the STF conciliation chamber and denounces institutional racism. Published on 08/07/2024. Available at: https://apiboficial.org/2024/08/07/apib-avalia-deixar-ca-mara-de-conciliacao-do-stf-e-denuncia-racismo-institucional/.

June 2025, and the text of the preliminary draft was produced and submitted to the Supreme Court justices for voting.

Suppose it is approved by the full STF and sent to Congress. In that case, there is a real risk that it will become a profoundly asymmetrical, anti-indigenous law, institutionally legitimized by the Supreme Court itself, under the guise of civility, consensus, and pacification.

Violence against the Avá-Guarani people: an ongoing genocide

Historically settled on the banks of the Paraná River and its tributaries in western Paraná, the Avá-Guarani indigenous people face a long history of rights violations, marked by the expropriation of their traditional territories. From the attacks by bandeirantes in the 17th century to the colonization policies of the so-called "March to the West"³⁷, in the 1930s, successive cycles of invasion and land grabbing particularly affected indigenous lands in the current municipalities of Guaíra, Terra Roxa, Santa Helena, and São Miguel do Iguaçu.

One of the most serious episodes of violation occurred in the 1970s, with the construction of the Itaipu Hydroelectric Power Plant, carried out without prior consultation or any form of reparation. The work resulted in the flooding of extensive areas traditionally occupied by the Avá-Guarani, deepening the territorial and cultural disruption of the people.

Currently, approximately 5,000 Avá-Guarani indigenous people reside in 31 villages scattered across two Indigenous Lands (Tekoha Guasu Guavira and Guasu Okoy Jacutinga), whose demarcation processes are continually hindered by political and legal obstacles. The first stage of demarcating the Guasu Guavira Indigenous Land (TI) was only concluded in 2018, with the publication of the Circumstantial Identification and Delimitation Report (RCID). However, the report was annulled in 2020 by a court decision, and although it was reinstated in 2023 by FUNAI, new lawsuits have once again paralyzed the process. At the beginning of 2024, an injunction issued by minister Edson Fachin (STF) authorized Funai to resume its work. However, in April of the same year, this decision was reversed, and the demarcation process remains suspended. Meanwhile, the indigenous people continue to be left unattended by the state and exposed to a series of violent attacks by farmers in the region.

^{37.} GUARANI YVYRUPA COMMISSION. *Guaíra & Terra Roxa - Report on Human Rights Violations against the Avá Guarani of Western Paraná.* Published in August 2017. Available at: https://acervo.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/documents/gnd00054.pdf.

Violence against the Avá-Guarani people worsened significantly between late 2023 and mid-2024, with at least 31 incidents documented in this study, including armed attacks, destruction of homes and crops, and the use of pesticides as chemical weapons—a practice reported to the United Nations (UN)³⁸ and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)³⁹. Racism against indigenous people is also common when accessing public services (such as health and education), in addition to actions to delegitimize and question indigenous identity promoted by farmers, local authorities, and media outlets in the region. In May 2025, the National Human Rights Council and the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders conducted a joint visit⁴⁰ to the site to assess the situation.

This upsurge occurred, on the one hand, with the approval of the Temporary Framework Law, which further weakens indigenous territorial rights; and, on the other, with the actions taken by indigenous people to reclaim their traditional territories. In March 2025, an agreement⁴¹ mediated by the courts was signed between the Itaipu Binacional company and the federal government for the acquisition of 3,000 hectares of land to partially compensate for the damage caused by the construction of the hydroelectric dam. Although relevant, the measure—which is emergency and limited in nature—does not replace the full reparation and compensation sought in a 2021 lawsuit⁴² de 2021 filed by the Attorney General's Office in the Federal Supreme Court.

- **38.** Terra de Direitos. With the participation of the UN Special Rapporteur, the event in Geneva denounces violations of rights by pesticides. Published: 09/17/2024. Available at: https://terradedireitos.org. <a href="https://te
- **39.** Terra de Direitos. Latin American organizations denounce Bayer to the OECD for systematic human rights violations. Published: 04/25/2024. Available at: https://terradedireitos.org.br/noticias/noticias/organizacoes-da-america-latina-denunciam-bayer-a-ocde-por-sistematica-violacao-dos-direitos-humanos/24005
- **40.** Comitê DDH. Committee carries out human rights mission to protect Avá-Guarani peoples in western Paraná. Published on 07/01/2025. Available at: https://comiteddh.org.br/ultimas-noticias/comite-realiza-missao-de-direitos-humanos-para-protecao-aos-povos-ava-guarani-no-oeste-do-parana/.
- **41.** Folha de São Paulo. *STF rejects agro's request and maintains land purchase plan for indigenous people via Itaipu.* Published on 04/08/2025. Available at: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2025/04/stf-rejeita-pedido-do-agro-e-mantem-plano-de-compra-de-terras-para-indigenas-via-itaipu.shtml
- 42. Supreme Court. Original Civil Action (ACO) No. 3555.

The continuation and worsening of violations highlight the urgent need to implement effective public policies for territorial demarcation, protection, and reparation. The guarantee of indigenous peoples' right to land, life, and dignity is an obligation of the Brazilian state and must be ensured in full and without delay.

Below is a timeline of the main attacks identified against the Avá-Guarani people between 2023 and 2024. It is important to highlight that the attacks persist—including the brutal murder registered in July 2025—and that the most recent episodes will be included in the next edition of this survey.

Timeline of attacks in 2023 and 2024



January 14, 2023:

Xeramoi (spiritual leader) of Tekoha Y'hovy is kidnapped and tortured by men carrying firearms in Guaíra (PR);



December 23, 2023:

The indigenous community of the Y'hovy village, located on the edge of the Tekoha Guasu Gavira indigenous land, is surrounded and harassed by private perpetrators who frighten residents with drones, rockets, and firecrackers. With a promise to return, the attackers left only after the arrival of the Federal Police:



December 24, 2023:

After the previous day's attacks, farmers launch another shooting attack on the Y'hovy village. Federal police officers instructed indigenous people not to drink from the water tank because of threats of contamination made by the attackers. On the same day, in the Yvyju Avary village, a group invaded the area in a shooting attack, set fire to the community's huts and property, and tortured and killed animals;

January 10, 2024:

Farmers and henchmen attack the resumption of the expansion of the Y'Hovy village at gunpoint. Three indigenous people were injured;

July 8, 2024:

Indigenous retaking of the Fazenda Brilhante village is surrounded by heavily armed farmers, who shoot at the houses and set fire to the huts:

July 13, 2024:

A missionary from the Indigenous Missionary Council (Cimi) – Southern Region is approached by a group of armed men while traveling to the Guasu Guavira Indigenous Territory to investigate a situation involving indigenous people. He managed to flee the scene:

July 14, 2024:

Indigenous people are surrounded and attacked by farmers after the expansion of Tekoha Taturi, in Guaíra (PR). Two of them were run over, and tarpaulin huts were set on fire. The attackers prevented the Mobile Emergency Care Service (SAMU) from arriving to attend to the injured;

July 15, 2024:

Indigenous person from Tekoha Ara Poty suffers a shooting attack while walking around the village during the day, in Terra Roxa (PR);

July 17, 2024:

Indigenous from the Tekoha Y'Hovy retaking, in Guaíra (PR), are surrounded by farmers and public security forces;

July 19, 2024:

Ava Guarani villages were once again attacked between the end of July 19 and the early hours of July 20. The offensives, promoted by farmers in the western region of Paraná, in the municipalities of Guaíra and Terra Roxa, are against retakes carried out by indigenous people since the beginning of July;

August 28, 2024:

Indigenous people from TI Tekoha Guasu Guavirá are attacked by farmers and henchmen armed with guns and chainsaws. Six people were injured, two of them seriously;

October 13, 2024:

The Y'Hovy village in Guaíra is attacked again. Shots were fired at a field where young people and children were playing soccer and at the house of one of the leaders;

October 17, 2024:

A new attack on the Tekoha Guasu Guavira Indigenous Land leaves two indigenous people injured. One of them was run over by a truck, and another indigenous man was beaten by employees of a farm in the region;

October 24, 2024:

With the support of the Military Police, a tractor applies pesticides over the plantations and houses of indigenous people from the Yvyju Avary community;

December 29, 2024:

Tekoha Yvy Okaju, formerly called Y'Hovy, in Guaíra, is attacked with gunfire and arson attacks on the community's houses, crops, and vegetation;

December 30, 2024:

Once again, Tekoha Yvy Okaju is the target of attacks and arson. An indigenous woman was injured;

December 31, 2024:

An indigenous man is wounded by gunfire on the third consecutive day of attacks on Tekoha Yvy Okaju.

IV. Escazú Agreement: the importance of ratification to advance the protection of environmental and climate defenders

In 2025, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30) will be held in Brazil, in the city of Belém (PA). Holding the event in the country has been viewed by both the federal government and the government of Pará as an opportunity to showcase Brazil as a leading player in global climate negotiations.

However, this protagonism is faced with a contradiction: the state where the world's largest climate conference will be held has one in five records of violence against human rights defenders. Of the 103 cases, 97 correspond to violations against people fighting for land, territory, and environmental rights, meaning that 94% of the violence committed in Pará was directed at environmental and climate defenders.

Of the 486 violations accounted for in this survey, 393 (80.9%) concerned human rights defenders in the context of the struggle for land, territory, and the environment. The data reveal a context of serious conflicts involving complex measures to be overcome, including tackling illegal mining, prospecting, and fishing; the actions of loggers and agribusiness; and the impacts generated by companies and large infrastructure projects, for example.

Faced with the seriousness of this scenario, the Brazilian state has seriously failed to adopt adequate measures to protect human, environmental, and climate rights defenders, who are the true guardians of the forests, waters, and land.

An example of this is the failure to ratify the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, also known as the Escazú Agreement. Adopted and signed by Brazil in 2018 in Costa Rica, the treaty is still pending ratification.

The Escazú Agreement is the first regional environmental treaty signed in 2018 between the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is structured around four pillars: (1) timely and adequate access to environmental information; (2) meaningful public participation in decision-making processes; (3) access to justice in

environmental matters; and (4) specific protection for human rights defenders in environmental matters⁴³.

Brazil's ratification of the Agreement would represent a significant step in the Brazilian government's commitment to addressing the climate crisis and protecting environmental defenders. Postponing this ratification, on the other hand, keeps the country in a fragile position and far from strengthening the mechanisms for protecting these actors, which are fundamental for environmental democracy.

Why is the Agreement important? A reading of our reality

Brazil was the country that killed the second most people who defend the land and the environment in 2023, according to the *Global Witness ranking*⁴⁴, behind Colombia. Together with Mexico and Honduras, the four countries—all in Latin America—accounted for more than 70% of global killings of this type of defender.

All this is happening while the world is experiencing its most profound moment of climate and environmental crisis. The 6th IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report confirms unprecedented climate change, driven by human activities, with "widespread and increasingly frequent adverse impacts." The document recognizes the interdependence between climate, ecosystems, biodiversity, and human societies⁴⁵.

In Brazil, the effects of the climate emergency have become increasingly noticeable⁴⁶, with disasters, floods, and historic droughts multiplying in different regions. Recent

^{43.} Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/29b2d-738-4090-45c5-a289-428b465ab60c/content

^{44.} Global Witness. *Silenced voices - Violence against land and environmental defenders*. Published: September 2024. Available at: https://gw.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Global_Witness_Land_And_Environmental_Defenders_Sep_2024_Report_Portuguese_Pin1IVA.pdf.

^{45.} IPCC. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2022. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/.

^{46.} G1/France Presse. *Brazil registers 'alarming' increase in climate disasters, according to Unifesp study.* Published: 12/28/2024. Available at: https://g1.globo.com/meio-ambiente/noticia/2024/12/28/brasil-registra-aumento-alarmante-de-desastres-climaticos-segundo-estudo.ghtml.

examples include the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the extreme drought in several cities in the northern region, rising sea levels, and heat waves in various parts of the country.

In this scenario, the work of human rights defenders is crucial. By fighting for the preservation of biodiversity, the guarantee of land and territory, and against the accelerated environmental destruction promoted by large enterprises and agribusiness, these defenders constitute a crucial barrier to environmental protection.

A study⁴⁷ by the University of São Paulo shows that in territories inhabited by traditional peoples and communities, deforestation is four times lower than in other areas. These include indigenous peoples, quilombolas, and other traditional communities, as well as peasant communities, who play a crucial role in preserving biomes, promoting sustainable soil management, and agroecological food production. A data collection⁴⁸ by the Socio-Environmental Institute, for example, shows that in the last 35 years, only Indigenous Lands have protected 20% of the total national forests.

In Brazil, on the other hand, the main sectors emitting greenhouse gases continue to be land use change and forestry (46%), which includes deforestation, followed by agriculture (28%), energy (18%), waste (4%), and industrial processes (4%). The devastation of Brazilian biomes makes Brazil the fifth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world⁴⁹

^{47.} Jornal da USP. *Deforestation is four times lower in areas where indigenous peoples and traditional communities reside.* Published: 02/06/2025. Available at: https://jornal.usp.br/diversidade/desmata-mento-e-quatro-vezes-menor-onde-ha-povos-indigenas-e-comunidades-tradicionais/.

^{48.} Instituto Socioambiental (ISA). *Forests need people*. Published in 2022. Available at: https://acervo.socioambiental.org/acervo/documentos/florestas-precisam-das-pessoas.

^{49.} Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Removals Estimating System (SEEG)/Climate Observatory. *Analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and their implications for Brazil's climate goals 1970-2023. Published in 2024.* Available at: https://seeg.eco.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SEEG-RELATORIO-ANALITICO-12.pdf.

In 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) published a report⁵⁰ highlighting the urgency of climate action to protect the forests of indigenous and tribal territories in Latin America, as well as the lives of those who preserve them. These territories are home to approximately one-third of the continent's forests, which account for 14% of the carbon stored in the world's tropical forests. In addition, these areas have a vast diversity of wild fauna and flora, and play a crucial role in stabilizing the local and regional climate.

Despite this fundamental role, environmental defenders continue to be the most threatened group in the country, as the data from this survey shows. State protection measures remain insufficient, and the failure to hold perpetrators of violence accountable is structural, both for environmental crimes and for violations against these people.

The Escazú Agreement is the first regional treaty to incorporate specific protection provisions for environmental defenders, recognizing the crucial role of those who work to defend territories, ecosystems, and communities, and establishes mechanisms to prevent threats and attacks. Its ratification by Brazil is therefore urgent and strategic, and it must have the support of organizations and movements committed to human rights, socio-environmental, and climate justice.

Fighting strategy: ratify the Escazú agreement!

The Agreement is the result of the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 in Latin America and the Caribbean. The document stands out for being: the only legally binding agreement from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); the first treaty on environmental issues in the region, and the first treaty in the world to include provisions on human rights defenders in environmental matters.

Brazil remains one of the few countries in the region that has not ratified the treaty. Of the 24 signatories, 18 have already completed the process. In May 2023, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva sent the text to the National Congress, where it is currently being processed by the Chamber of Deputies (MSC 209/2023), with analysis

^{50.} Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Los pueblos indígenas y tribales y la gobernanza de los bosques. Una oportunidad para la acción climática en América Latina y el Caribe - Resumen ejecutivo. Published in 2021. Available at: https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f46ee7f5-544e-4caa-83ab-05a61a2173f6/content.

pending in four thematic committees: Foreign Affairs and National Defense; Environment and Sustainable Development; Finance and Taxation; and Constitution, Justice, and Citizenship.

The process is moving slowly. In March 2024, around 160 national and international organizations sent a letter calling for urgent ratification⁵¹. However, there is resistance from some sectors, such as the rural caucus, which mistakenly fears that the agreement could impose restrictions on agribusiness.

Ratifying the Agreement means recognizing that Escazú can provide answers to issues that are central to the region, such as the lack of transparency regarding environmental data; violence against human rights defenders in environmental matters; insufficient social participation in decision-making on policies and projects related to environmental issues, especially populations affected by the impacts of megaprojects; as well as impunity for serious environmental crimes committed in recent years.

The treaty is an opportunity for the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean to build responses to the climate crisis from the Global South, with popular protagonism, the valorization of traditional peoples and communities, and the protection of their territories, the guarantee of human rights, and the promotion of environmental equality policies. These objectives align with the historical struggles of social movements in Brazil, which are directly related to socio-environmental and climate justice, including the demarcation of indigenous lands, the titling of quilombola territories, agrarian reform, and the right to the city.

Against this backdrop, the ratification of the Escazú Agreement is a fundamental step towards socio-environmental and climate justice, ensuring transparency, democracy, effective protection, and social participation in environmental decisions in Brazil and Latin America.

^{51.} Terra de Direitos. Social organizations ask the Brazilian government to ratify the Escazú Agreement as a matter of urgency. Published on 03/26/2024. Available: https://terradedireitos.org.br/noticias/noticias/organizacoes-sociais-solicitam-ao-estado-brasileiro-urgencia-na-ratificacao-do-acordo-de-escazu/23992.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **1.** Strengthen federal and state protection programs for human rights defenders, ensuring their structuring, qualification, and continuity of action in all federal units and the Federal District:
- 2. Strengthen the process of institutionalizing state programs by establishing specific actions aimed at promoting the dialogues and articulations necessary to promote and edit state and district laws that institute programs in the territories;
- **3.** Develop actions focused on the production of data related to federal, state, and district programs, allowing the monitoring of the implementation of the public policy for the protection of human rights defenders in the programs executed by the state governments, the federal district, and the federal government;
- **4.** Promote transparency regarding the implementation of the PPDDH in the states, with information on the organizations executing the programs in the states, information on the budget and work plans, and the federal states' counterparts; the composition of the technical teams and the Deliberative Councils:
- **5.** Ratify and implement the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as the Escazú Agreement, adopted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

We also reaffirm the recommendations previously made in other instances, such as:

- a) Sales Pimenta Technical Working Group coordinated by the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship:
 - **6.** Edit, in the form of a Presidential Decree, as soon as possible, the Proposed National Plan for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders prepared by the Sales Pimenta TWG and delivered to the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship in December 2024;

- **7.** Forward to Congress the proposal for a draft bill drawn up by the Sales Pimenta TWG establishing a federal legal framework for the policy of protection of human rights defenders;
- **8.** Create a National Protection System, integrating the federal, state, and municipal levels, the Justice and Public Security System, and protection networks, with a clear definition of responsibilities, dynamics, and forms of coordination, in order to guarantee the protection of human rights defenders:
- **9.** Set up the Specialized Center, linked to the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators and Environmentalists (PPDDH), to provide technical support and context and risk analysis to the federal and state Protection Programs;
- 10. Implement financial and budgetary guidelines and mechanisms by the Union, states, Federal District, municipalities, civil society organizations, and international cooperation to promote coordinated and efficient action for financing and exchange of best practices with a view to the comprehensive protection of human rights defenders, based on parameters established by the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship (MDHC).

b) Inter-American Court of Human Rights:

- **11.** Create and implement a protocol for investigating crimes committed against human rights defenders, as well as a system of indicators to measure the effectiveness of the protocol (*Ruling in the Case of Sales Pimenta Vs. Brasil, 2022*)⁵²;
- **12.** Create a mechanism that allows for the reopening of investigations and judicial proceedings, including in cases where the statute of limitations has expired, when a ruling by the Inter-American Court determines the international responsibility of the State for failing to comply with its

^{52.} The terms of this point can be found in paragraphs 170 and 172. Corte IDH (IA Court) *Case of Sales Pimenta Vs. Brasil. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs.* Judgment of June 30, 2022. Available at: https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/resumen_454_por.pdf.

obligation to investigate human rights violations diligently and impartially (Ruling in the Case of Sales Pimenta vs. Brasil, 2022)⁵³;

- **13.** Adapt the Brazilian legal system regarding the jurisdiction of military courts, bringing it into line with the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court, so that military courts do not have jurisdiction to prosecute and judge crimes committed against civilians, limiting themselves to judging military personnel on active duty for crimes that, by their nature, are directed against the legal interests of the military (*Ruling in the Case of Tavares Pereira and others vs. Brasil, 2023*)⁵⁴;
- **14.** Include specific, permanent content in the training curriculum for security forces that work in public demonstrations, with a view to raising awareness among police officers of their duty to respect and protect the civilian population and train them in international standards on the use of force in contexts of social protest (*Ruling in the Case of Tavares Pereira and others vs. Brasil, 2023*)⁵⁵;

^{53.} The terms of this point can be found in paragraphs 180. Idem.

^{54.} The terms of this point can be found in paragraph 209. Corte IDH (IA Court) Case Tavares Pereira and others Vs. Brasil. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs. Judgment of November 16, 2023. Available at: https://terradedireitos.org.br/uploads/arquivos/Sentencia_Tavares_Pereira_y_otros_Vs. Brasil%283%29.pdf.

^{55.} The terms of this point can be found in paragraph 206. Idem.

c) Special Rapporteur⁵⁶ of the United Nations Organization on Human Rights Defenders:

- **15.** Develop, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, a bill that ensures full respect for human rights and the environment, as well as climate change mitigation by Brazilian and foreign companies operating in the country, with special attention to high-risk sectors (mining, agribusiness, logging, tourism, and energy production), in line with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Mary Lawor Report, 2025)⁵⁷:
- **16.** To the President of the Republic: (a) publicly declare that the protection of human rights defenders and the fight against impunity for crimes against them are priorities for the federal government, requesting the cooperation of all state authorities; and (b) strengthen state human rights protection bodies, especially those related to land, the environment, and climate change, ensuring adequate financial resources (*Mary Lawor Report*, 2025)⁵⁸.

^{56.} Special rapporteurs are independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council who monitor and denounce human rights violations in specific countries or themes. They carry out visits, analyze complaints, issue public warnings, and present reports to the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly.

^{57.} United Nations Organization. *A/HRC/58/53/Add.2: Informe de la Relatora Especial sobre la situación de los defensores de los derechos humanos, Mary Lawlor, acerca de su visita al Brasil.* Published on January 6, 2025. available at: https://docs.un.org/es/A/HRC/58/53/Add.2.

^{58.} Idem.

d) Sales Pimenta Working Group of the National Council of Justice59:

- **17.** To the Federal Police: adopt a protocol to improve the monitoring of private security companies and their relations with militias, standardize investigation guidelines, and strengthen nationwide monitoring;
- **18.** To the National Council of Public Prosecutor's Office (CNMP): to draw up a diagnosis on the activities carried out by the Federal Police in inspecting private security companies, especially those operating in the field;
- 19. Create a system for centralizing investigations related to urgent measures established by the Inter-American Human Rights System, whether they are Precautionary Measures, referring to the IACHR, or Provisional Measures, within the scope of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. This could take place in the area of the General Coordination for the Repression of Crimes against Human Rights (Decree No. 11,348, of January 1, 2023);
- **20.** To the CNMP: provide for the participation of victims' relatives in investigations into homicides committed by perpetrators other than the police, to help combat impunity in agrarian conflicts;
- **21.** Draw up a Protocol for the Trial of Crimes against Human Rights Defenders:
- **22.** Improve the judicial units, agrarian ombudsman, and agrarian prosecutors, and create specialized chambers in the courts of justice;
- **23.** Ensure priority and urgency in the prosecution of cases involving violence against human rights defenders in the justice system.

^{59.} The Sales Pimenta Working Group was established within the National Council of Justice, pursuant to operative paragraph 7 of the judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of Sales Pimenta vs. Brazil, of June 30, 2022.

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