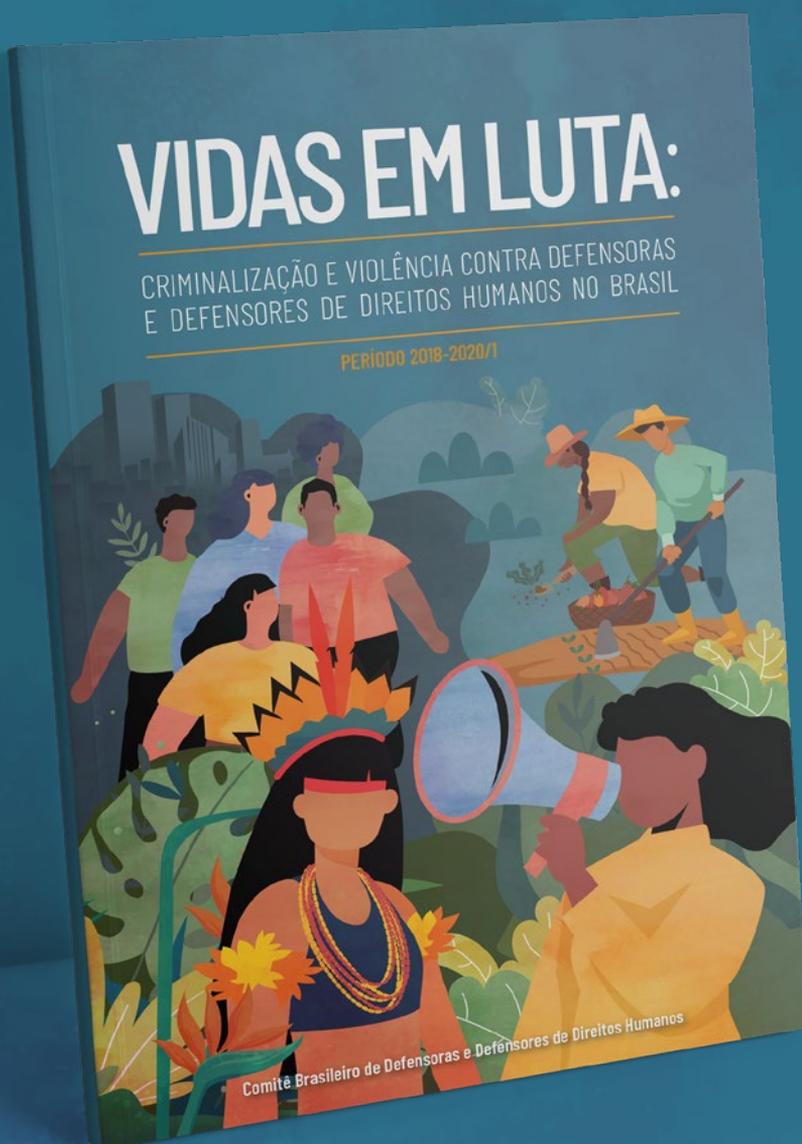


The systematic that structures violence against human rights defenders is denounced by the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders in its new Dossier



The upsurge of the human rights agenda in Brazil is visible in the period analyzed by the Struggling Lives Dossier, which encompasses the period from 2018 to 2020/1, and directly impacts men and women human rights defenders. And it is this **strong alliance of violence against Human Rights defenders, and a conservative, racist, and misogynist agenda** which are unveiled by the Brazilian Committee of Men and Women Human Rights Defenders in the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of the Struggling Lives Dossier.

One of its focal points is a correlation between **militarization, the genocide of black people, and violence against human rights defenders**. According to a survey by the Federal Audit Court (*Tribunal de Contas da União* – TCU), in July 2020 there were 6,157 active and reserve military officers performing civilian roles in the federal government, including 8 ministers, a figure that represents more than twice the number in the previous administration. In 2018, the year of the murder of city councilwoman Marielle Franco and Anderson Gomes, and the year when the federal military intervention in Rio de Janeiro was declared, 1375 deaths caused by police operations were recorded, according to data from the Intervention Observatory (*Observatório da Intervenção*). This context of increased militarization impacts the lives of human rights defenders such as popular communicators and the victims' family members, especially the mothers of the murdered, arrested, or missing youth, which start to suffer violence since they don't remain silent in the face of this reality.

**To silence human rights defenders' voices**, whether organizations, social movements, or even journalists and communicators, is something present in Brazil, and refined in Jair Bolsonaro's government. According to data from Artigo 19, from January 2019 to September 15th, 2020, at least 449 rights violations were practiced against journalists and communicators by the President of the Republic, his ministers, or elected family members. Among the 449 attacks recorded since the inauguration of Jair Bolsonaro, approximately 23% (102) were by the President.

Another way of silencing these voices is through the **reduction of mechanisms for civil society participation**. Through the Decree



9,759/2019, published in April, several collegiate bodies of the public administration such as committees, councils, forums, and groups were extinct. Some of the consequences of this have been the **deepening of an anti-rights agenda, a decrease of popular monitoring regarding public policies, and an increase in human rights violations**. A prime example of this happened to the National Environment Council (*Conselho Nacional do Meio Ambiente – Conama*) which had civil society participation substantially reduced and government members' participation increased. Soon afterward, devastating measures for the environment were undertaken by Conama, for example, the destructuring of Ibama and Chico Mendes Institute; the flexibilization and reduction of fines related to environmental crimes; the deregulation of tens of agrochemicals; among other measures. The direct and indirect consequences of these measures are seen by everyone, such as in the emblematic fires that occurred in 2019 and 2020 in Pantanal, Cerrado, and the Amazon, which, according to data from the National Institute for Space Research (*Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais – INPE*), have broken historical records. Data from INPE also point out that between July 20<sup>th</sup>, and August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 3553 fire outbreaks in indigenous territories were recorded, reaching 148 areas<sup>1</sup> and, in 2020 alone, 15% of Pantanal was destroyed by fire.

Those who have been experiencing this reality are the traditional communities, quilombolas, indigenous, rural dwellers, and human rights defenders who have been seeing their territory get fire-ravaged, and even attacked by the Brazilian State through **fake news wave, misinformation, and criminalization processes**. In this sense, we highlight the imprisonment of the activists of the fire brigade in Alter do Chão, Pará, in 2019, who were voluntarily acting to control fire outbreaks in the region and were, based on completely contradictory pieces of evidence, accused of causing the fires that ravaged the region. Moreover, this same investigation has led the Health and Joy NGO to suffer search and seizure warrants for the materials in their headquarters. The case of riverbed communities in Pantanal that had to see the State's Environment Secretary insinuate that they were responsible for the fire outbreaks, or the President's speech at the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the UN's General Assembly

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<sup>1</sup> As highlighted by the Pastoral Land Commission's article entitled "The new Brazilian agrarian policy, the violence against land people as institutional ethos", written for the Dossier.



when he said that the ones responsible for the fire were “indigenous people and caboclos” are further examples.

These facts, contrary to every study and indicator that point out that fire outbreaks occur in areas of great land concentration of large landowners, take place while **territorial conflicts in rural areas involving traditional, indigenous, quilombolas, and rural peoples and communities are on the rise**. According to CPT, in 2019, land conflicts were 23% higher than in 2018, the highest recorded number of occurrences in all the history of documentation conducted by the organization (35 years). The events involving conflicts over water have increased 77% in 2019 (data from CPT); it was also verified in 2020 the registration of more than 100 new agrochemical products in Brazil, which directly impacts traditional communities, as denounced by the human rights defenders of Pantanal; besides land falsifying, illegal evictions and invasions of traditional territories. There is also the serious reality of mining in the country, with particular attention to Minas Gerais where, even after the crimes that happened in Mariana and Brumadinho, we witness the development of mining projects that affect hundreds of communities, besides cases of thousands of dispossessed people due to the risk of other dam ruptures. In this sense, we highlight the mining complex projected for the North of Minas Gerais, which envisages the construction of dams, besides an iron ore pipeline that will cut through the states of Minas Gerais and Bahia, pumping water from the semi-arid region that already suffers from droughts and is inhabited by tens of traditional communities.

The Global Witness NGO has pointed out that in 2019, 24 environmental rights defenders were murdered in Brazil, and among them 10 indigenous people, which places us in 4<sup>th</sup> in the rank of most violent countries for Human Rights Defenders. The data reported in the Dossier and exemplified above uncover the reasons that give rise to such violence.

This reality is not less emblematic in the urban scenario, with attention to human rights defenders in urban occupations which, as pointed out in an article from the Dossier written by the Popular Movement’s Central, the Popular Brigades and the Committee’s Working Group, are comprised mostly of black people living from informal work and who don’t have access to basic public services such as water, sanitation, energy, and transportation. In this context, **women human rights defenders acting in defense of these occupations live under threats and pressure from public or private agents** and are daily at risk. It is highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated these realities, resulting in evictions of at least 6 thousand Brazilian families between March and August 2020, according to data from

the “Zero Eviction” (“*Despejo Zero*”) Campaign, further worsening the health and social crisis in Brazil.

The pandemic scenario amid the context of violence against men and women human rights defenders in Brazil demonstrates how it was capable of accentuating this scenario of inequalities. We highlight that, according to the Health Ministry, up until October 5<sup>th</sup>, 42% of the deaths recorded in Brazil were of black people and 32% of white people. Independent data raised by the National Coordination of Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (*Coordenação Nacional de Articulação de Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas* – CONAQ)<sup>2</sup> and by the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil (*Articulação dos Povos Indígenas no Brasil* - APIB) highlight that 167 quilombolas and 859 indigenous people have died of COVID 19 by October 2020. Apart from the evictions and the increase in agrochemicals in Brazil, **the Dossier also points out at least 13 murders of human rights defenders in this period, according to a preliminary survey by Justiça Global and Terra de Direitos, besides threat, torture, and illegal arrest situations; increase in femicide almost everywhere in Brazil, according to the Brazilian forum of public safety; continuity of big ventures in traditional territories, violating several rights of these communities; increased deforestation in the Amazon; increased police lethality in suburbs, with a reduction of this number in Rio de Janeiro after a Supreme Federal Court’s preliminary injunction which imposed some limits to these actions.**

The LGBTQI+ population has been dramatically suffering the consequences of this pandemic and this conservative agenda that has been prevailing in Brazil in recent years. According to the National Association of Travestis and Transexuals (*Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais* – Antra), in **August 2020, 129 travestis and transexuals were murdered in Brazil, the highest number in the last 04 years.** The murders of travestis and transexuals in Brazil also involve human rights defenders. As pointed out by Antra, in 2019 at least 03 such cases were reported.

<sup>2</sup> Covid-19 data on indigenous peoples and quilombola communities.  
<https://covid19.socioambiental.org>  
and <https://apiboficial.org>



There are also **indicatives regarding the forms of violence suffered by women human rights defenders**, which were systematized in an article written by the Margarida Alves Collective of Popular Assistance, the Feminist Consulting Center (*Centro Feminista de Assessoria – Cfemea*), and the Criola organization, such as: threats, harassment and/or physical, sexual and/or psychological assault in the private sphere (inside the family or close people), and in the public sphere: non-acknowledgement, disqualification of their role, marginalization and exclusion from public and political life, even in their own organizations, communities and movements; invisibilization and silencing of their contributions and opinions; social discredit, stigmatization and attacks on their honor and reputation; assaults, threats and physical, sexual and/or psychological violence against their daughters, sons and family members; blackmail and threats of taking custody of their sons and daughters; murder of their family, organization or movement members; harassment, violence and attacks on the internet, which include threats of sexual violence, verbal assaults, comments about their sexuality, “doxing” (internet publishing of someone’s private information by third parties), and social discredit. Regarding violence in virtual environments, it is important to highlight that according to research by Amnesty International, quoted by the philosopher Djamila Ribeiro<sup>3</sup>, black women are 84% more susceptible to become victims of hate speech on the internet. The impact of this violence is real in the health and life of women defenders, and several of them end up distancing themselves from public and political life to protect themselves.

At last, the alarming political violence in Brazil must be highlighted. According to research by the Terra de Direitos and Justiça Global organizations, 2020 already represented, before the elections, an increase of 37% in cases of violence if compared to 2016. Women are the victims of 76% of the registered offenses, whether on the internet or not. And, by judging the results of the 2020 elections, it is noteworthy that the Fake News wave has a strong bond with racism and sexism, which leads to women being heavily attacked during and after electoral periods.

In this complex framework of rights violations in Brazil, which impacts the lives of people, groups, social movements, and organizations fighting in defense of these

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.geledes.org.br/djamilaribeiro-denunciara-twitter-no-ministerio-publico-por-explorar-o-racismo-e-a-misoginia/>. Access on: October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

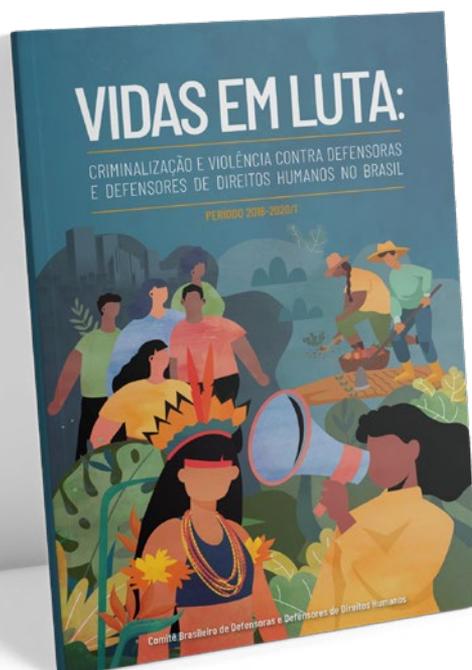


rights, The National Program for Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Brazil (*Programa de Proteção a Defensoras e Defensores de Direitos Humanos* – PPDDH) is unable to adequately perform its role. According to research conducted by the Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders – CBDDH especially for this Dossier, in April 2020, the federal PPDDH had approximately 483 men and women defenders included in the program. Out of these cases, 298 were related to traditional peoples and communities.

However, 16 years after its adoption, the policy has been suffering for years from execution discontinuities and its broadening is not significant. Currently, the Program is effective only in Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Ceará, Maranhão, Pará, and Rio de Janeiro and through a Federal Team, which serves the other 20 states and the Federal District. Even though there was a significant budgetary leap from 2017 to 2018 destined for the PPDDH, it did not result in the Program's effective implementation in more states or an improvement in the protection's effectiveness. For a commission of the National Human Rights Council, most of the current budgetary resources are destined for the financing of teams and travel expenses, and not much is destined for protective equipment and support to the needs of HRDs. There is also difficulty in budget execution and the resources end up being returned or relocated so that they don't get returned to the National Treasure.

Women human rights defenders included in the PPDDH and interviewed by the Committee have pointed out weaknesses in the protection destined to them, and that they often feel helpless in the face of the threats they suffer.

In the face of this whole scenario, the Struggling Lives Dossier becomes an important space for the systematization and denouncement of this reality, besides emphasizing the strong articulation of social movements and organizations that live this context and work together to transform it.





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