

## **ACT Alliance public statement on solidarity and democracy in Brazil**

Brazil is facing a serious political, social, economic and environmental crisis, characterized by a real threat to the democratic state of law, which is revealed in the threat to civil liberties, the attack on human rights and on other fundamental guarantees present in the Federal Constitution.

The 2018 electoral process was taking place in the context of political violence, which is being compared to the fascist waves of the past. Swastika symbols have appeared in different public places, especially in universities, spaces frequented by the LGBTI+ community, and churches.

The instrumentalization of religion by politicians was another feature of this electoral process. Bishops, pastors, and priests have used their religious influence to support political projects clearly contrary to human rights, since they reinforce the release of arms for the civilian population, defend the patriarchy, and deny the rights of women and LGBTI+ people. In addition to the crisis of institutions such as the Federal Supreme Court and the Federal Public Ministry, Brazil is experiencing a crisis in the ecclesiastical institutions. As already seen in other countries, especially in United Kingdom and the United States, fake news flooded the electoral process in Brazil.

The electoral result encourages the growth of fascist positions. Democracy is at risk.

The current context is characterized by an increase in intolerance, racism and violence. There is an increase in gender-based violence and a setback in gender justice. Human rights violations against the black population is a systematic practice; data of UN Women on black youth homicide reveals the extermination power of Brazilian racism: there are 63 deaths of black youth per day. As for indigenous people, more than 100 are killed every year, and about 800 die from malnutrition and diseases (10% of children under 5 years) per year, and there are already more than 100 indigenous suicides per year<sup>1</sup>.

ACT Alliance denounces the ongoing persecution of Afro-Brazilians and indigenous spiritualities, which have suffered various kinds of threats, and affirms the value of religious diversity. Such pressures reveal the link between the financial interests of groups related to mining, agribusiness and the real estate market, since, for example, one form of deterritorialization of an indigenous tradition is precisely to attack or eliminate its religion, which offers people their worldview and sense of life.

We are concerned by the increase in crimes against human rights defenders, with arbitrary arrests, criminalization and killings. According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS), three out of every four murders of human rights defenders in the world took place in Latin America, concentrated in Brazil and Colombia, with an average one murder every five days in Brazil.

The publication of Decree 9.527 on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2018, which creates the Task Force of Intelligence for the confrontation of organized crime, without clarifying what is understood as organized crime raises concern about the targeting, persecution and criminalisation of human rights organizations and social movements that work in favour of social justice, human rights and popular organization.

We, as faith-based organizations, find ourselves in the face of an ethical and prophetic imperative.

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<sup>1</sup> Report: Violence against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil: Data for 2017. Indigenous Missionary Council - CIMI. 2018.  
[https://cimi.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Relatorio-violencia-contra-povos-indigenas\\_2017-Cimi.pdf](https://cimi.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Relatorio-violencia-contra-povos-indigenas_2017-Cimi.pdf)

Our faith is political insofar as it assumes the Christian responsibility that comes from baptism. It is this faith that unconditionally commits us to human dignity, to the care for common goods, to the culture of peace and non-violence, to the promotion of human rights and justice, clearly expressed in the Gospel, especially in the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12), and in the practices of mercy (Mt 25:35-45).

**Therefore, we denounce:**

- fascism and its threat to democracy;
- the persecution of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous spiritualities, affirming the importance of confronting religious intolerance;
- gender violence; and
- the criminalization and killing of the defenders of human, civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights in social movements, networks, and organizations of activism and social solidarity.

**And we call to action:**

- governments and international organizations, to denounce this situation and act for the protection and guarantee of the security of those who fight for the cause of justice and peace-- human rights defenders;
- international solidarity in its various organs of diakonia, aid and multilateral and state funding in order to guarantee an economic process with inclusive models, respect for self-management, self-regulation and the participation of traditional peoples, minorities and all people and communities excluded from the labour market and its products, and to guarantee the use of the country's wealth to reduce socio-economic inequalities, in order to *Leave no one behind*, according to the commitments of the ACT Alliance in its document on Transforming Development;
- multilateral advocacy bodies to defend the rule of law and democracy, to protect, guarantee and promote the permanent implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, and to invest in all possible mechanisms to reduce inequalities and to guarantee gender justice, in collaboration with all members of our Alliance and other ACT forums, as well as with other forums and networks for the defence of human rights, as well as with the global ecumenical community;
- all interreligious initiatives that value the importance of direct, participatory and comprehensive democracy, to spread the importance of the lay state which must ensure the free expression of all religions and which should guide public policies based on civil and constitutional rights, without being based on a specific religion.

ECUMENICAL FORUM ACT BRAZIL – FEACT BRAZIL, OCTOBER 2018.