

## Remembering assassinated Brazilian activists

14th of March 2020  
University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

On the date marking the 2 years of the assassination of Ms. Marielle Franco, a group of Brazilian and supporters from other nationalities gathered in a small symbolic demonstration. Her assassination is one of the many stories of violence against the Brazilian Democracy, and we present here our thoughts and feelings in the following manifesto, and a list of many activists that should not be forgotten.



### Manifesto

On the 14th of March 2018, Ms Marielle Franco, a councilwoman of the city of Rio de Janeiro, was assassinated. Ms Franco was returning from a round-table discussion on the empowerment of young black women when nine shots were fired at her car, killing Ms Franco and her driver, Mr Anderson Gomes. Her assassination was motivated by her disruptive approach to police brutality and organized crime in the city of Rio de Janeiro: as a member of the human-rights commission, she denounced corrupt police officers, but also fought hard to strengthen the protection for law-abiding police officers and their families, directly threatening the reach of the militias spawning out of the Government. Two years later, investigations have advanced, but ultimately her murder is still unresolved.

Whilst acknowledging that we, Brazilians in Oxford, are here due to a combination of privilege, effort and luck, we believe it is urgent to denounce the escalation of violence against the Legal Democratic State of the Federal Republic of Brazil.

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This violence is best represented by the murder of the democratically elected representative, Ms. Franco, furthermore, there is evidence of an increase in the number of threats to and assassination of social activists. In 2019, at least 26 activists were assassinated in Brazil. These activists fought for various causes: environmental protection; the struggle for land in rural areas; the rights of kilombo communities; indigenous and LGBTQ+ people. This violence has always been present in Brazil; however, these past two years have been different.

Brazil is still struggling to recover from the crisis in our economy and in our democracy. The economy is yet to recover from the recession that started in 2015, and the sequence of austerity measures adopted since then has failed to deliver sustained, real and distributed economic growth. Parallel to this recession, our democracy has been hit by the impeachment of President Dilma, President Temer's mandate being mired by a sequence of scandals, and finally the convoluted election process of 2018 - marked by manoeuvres to prevent candidates from running and to remove others from public scrutiny.

These past two years have seen the consolidation of a new norm in Brazil. Political speech and public debate have inched closer and closer to a form of hate speech intertwined with identity politics. Federal and State campaigning officials in 2018 adopted victimization and villainization tactics aimed at dividing the public and preventing scrutiny on their plans and policies. In 2019, Federal and State elected officials have escalated their tone when discussing the validity of state brutality as a tool to remedy social disruption.

This new violent tone used by officials in the Legislative and Executive branch has found some echo in the Judiciary, mostly on the State level. Police brutality has risen to new levels: in the city of Rio de Janeiro alone, the police killed 1,810 people in 2019, including children and teenagers.

Furthermore, there is clear evidence that officials from all three branches of government have actively engaged in direct attacks or effective censorship of the free press and media outlets. From high-profile politicians openly promoting personal attacks on journalists to the judiciary prohibiting the publication of investigative stories and public prosecutors pressing charges against journalists. In 2018 politicians attacked the editorial staff of a weekly news magazine, in 2019 the Government withdrew publicity from specific news outlets, and more recently a reporter who wrote about the use of fake news during the 2018 elections was targeted with sexist insults during a parliamentary inquiry, by the same politicians that later on sparked a wave of online threats on her reputation.

These are selected stories of a larger movement fuelled by public officials and other members of society that will inevitably threaten Brazil. Before the movement gains critical mass, we urge the global community to keep denouncing these threats against the Brazilian Democracy. The Brazilian public and most importantly our Politicians must come together, look beyond partisan lines and projects of power, and join efforts to prevent any backsliding in our Legal Democratic State and in the social rights enshrined in the 1988 constitution. Our Legal Democratic State envisioned in 1988 was never a dream. It is a plan, a roadmap to lift all Brazilians from a past of violence, brutality and social inequality, towards a better future.

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### Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil\* Fundamental Principles

*Article 1. The Federative Republic of Brazil, formed by the indissoluble union of the states and municipalities and of the Federal District, is a legal democratic state and is founded on:*

- I – sovereignty;*
- II – citizenship;*
- III – the dignity of the human person;*
- IV – the social values of labour and of the free enterprise;*
- V – political pluralism.*

*Sole paragraph. All power emanates from the people, who exercise it by means of elected representatives or directly, as provided by this Constitution.*

*Article 2. The Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial, independent and harmonious among themselves, are the powers of the Union.*

*Article 3. The fundamental objectives of the Federative Republic of Brazil are:*

- I – to build a free, just and solidary society;*
- II – to guarantee national development;*
- III – to eradicate poverty and substandard living conditions and to reduce social and regional inequalities;*
- IV – to promote the well-being of all, without prejudice as to origin, race, sex, colour, age and any other forms of discrimination.*

*Article 4. The international relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil are governed by the following principles:*

- I – national independence;*
- II – prevalence of human rights;*
- III – self-determination of the peoples; IV – non-intervention;*
- V – equality among the states;*
- VI – defence of peace;*
- VII – peaceful settlement of conflicts;*
- VIII – repudiation of terrorism and racism;*
- IX – cooperation among peoples for the progress of mankind;*
- X – granting of political asylum.*

*Sole paragraph. The Federative Republic of Brazil shall seek the economic, political, social and cultural integration of the peoples of Latin America, viewing the formation of a Latin-American community of nations.*

\* Constitution translated by the Brazilian Supreme Court -  
[https://www.stf.jus.br/arquivo/cms/legislacaoConstituicao/anexo/brazil\\_federal\\_constitution.pdf](https://www.stf.jus.br/arquivo/cms/legislacaoConstituicao/anexo/brazil_federal_constitution.pdf)

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*Dilma Ferreira Silva*, 45, was the coordinator of Brazil's Movement of People Affected by Dams (Movimento Atingidos por Barragens). Her husband, Claudionor Costa da Silva, and her friend Hilton Lopes, were also killed on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019, in the state of Pará.



*João Maria Figueiredo*, 36, was a policeman and leader of the movement 'Anti-Fascism Police Officers' (Policiais Antifascismo) in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. Killed on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018.



*Paulo Paulino Guajajara*, 26, was an indigenous leader and member of the group 'Guardians of the Forest' (Guardiões da Floresta), which fiscalises and denounces illegal invasions in indigenous lands. Killed by illegal loggers during an ambush in the Arariboia indigenous reserve, in the state of Maranhão, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.



*José Esídio Dias (Seu Vermelho)*, 80, was a leader of Quilombo Rio dos Macacos in Salvador, state of Bahia. Killed inside his home on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Quilombo Rio dos Macacos is a settlement founded by Afro-Brazilians where about 85 families live. The area is disputed with the Brazilian Navy.



*Rosane Santiago Silveira*, 59, was an environmental and human rights activist in the state of Bahia, where she advocated to create an environmental protection association on the island of Barra Velha. Tortured and murdered at her home on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



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*Luis Ferreira da Costa*, 72, was a landless worker and student at the settlement 'Marielle lives' (Marielle Vive) in Valinhos, state of São Paulo. Murdered on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, during a peaceful protest demanding access to potable water for the settlement.



*Josimar da Silva Conde ('Tripinha')*, 47, was a rubber tapper and the president of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) in the city of Xapuri, state of Acre. Killed during a dispute over land limits inside the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



*Sandro Cipriano Pereira*, 35, was an agroecology teacher for the NGO 'Service for Alternative Technology' (Serviço de Tecnologia Alternativa), advocate for family farmers, and LGBTQ+ activist. Killed in the state of Pernambuco on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



*Raimundo Benício Guajajara*, 38, was an indigenous leader in the state of Maranhão. Killed inside indigenous lands while he returned from a meeting of indigenous leaders on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 - few weeks after the assassination of Paulo Paulino Guajajara.



*Marcio Rodrigues dos Reis*, 33, was a landless rural workers leader in Anapu, in the state of Pará - the area where Sister Dorothy Stang was assassinated in 2005. Killed on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, after denouncing the threats and violence of farmers against landless workers.



*Cacique Emyra Waiãpi*, 68, was a leader of the indigenous community Waiãpi in the state of Pará. Killed by illegal miners inside indigenous lands in Pedra Branca do Amapari on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019.

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*Mestre Moa do Katendê*, 63, was a capoeirista, musician, and educator. Killed on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, during an argument after the first round of the presidential elections, when he declared his vote for the opposition candidate.



*Humberto Peixoto Lemos*, 37, was an activist for indigenous rights and member of the Tuyuca indigenous community. He suffered an attack on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, and died from complications on December 7<sup>th</sup>.



*Antônio Sobrinho*, 55, was a family farmers' union leader and city councilman (PDT, Democratic Labour Party) in Natuba, state of Paraíba. Killed on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.



*Maxciel Pereira dos Santos* worked for the National Foundation for Indigenous People (Fundação Nacional do Índio - FUNAI) and combated illegal invasions by hunters, loggers and miners in indigenous lands. Killed in front of his family in Tabatiganga, state of Amazonas, on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



*Marielle Franco*, 38, was a city councilwoman in Rio de Janeiro (PSOL, Socialism and Liberty Party). Originally from Favela da Maré, Marielle was a member of the LGBTQ community and a staunch activist for human and minority rights. She was assassinated on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, by government-related paramilitary groups.