

Environmental defenders suffering death threats and "under protection" in the state of Pará, Eastern Amazonia, Brazil

Jondison Cardoso Rodrigues^{1, a}

Raione Lima Campos^b

José Raimundo Santana Jr^c

^a Federal University of Para, Brazil

^{b, c} Pastoral Land Commission, Brazil

Abstract

Latin America has a long history of extractive and exploitative territorial activities, dating back to the colonial era. However, in the last decade there has been a steep increase in these activities, and in socio-environmental conflicts, in Latin America. There are indications of the links between the exploitation of natural resources and the violation of human rights, which materializes in the Amazon through the increase of expulsions and evictions of families, assassination attempts, murders, illegal imprisonments, intimidation, and threats. The main targets of these crimes are leaders who head the struggle to defend the rights of collectivities to land and territory, the environment, human rights and their multiple cultural and life expressions. The state of Pará (Eastern Amazonia) has appeared in the last decade as one of the states in Brazil with the highest incidence of cases of land conflicts, assassinations, aggression, defamation, and death threats directed against community leaders and environmental defenders. Thus, this article aims to quantify, characterize and reflect on the environmental defenders and community leaders suffering death threats and under legal protection in the state of Pará, Eastern Amazonia (between 2014 and 2020). It also seeks to identify the main activities and sectors that threaten these groups and the reasons behind the intensification of threats in recent years.

Keywords: Amazonia, conflicts, human and environmental rights, Pará

Résumé

L'Amérique Latine possède une grande histoire d'activités et pratiques extractives, exploratoires et dépouillement des territoires, qui renvoie à l'époque coloniale. Cependant, il y a eu, non seulement, une augmentation considérable de ces activités et pratiques en Amérique Latine durant la dernière décennie, mais aussi des conflits socio-environnementaux. Il y a une relation progressive entre l'exploitation des ressources naturelles et la violation des droits de l'homme en Amazonie sous la forme d'expulsion des familles, tentatives d'assassinats, meurtres, prisons illégales, intimidations et menaces aux leaders, situés au premier rang de ce combat, chargés de défendre les droits des collectivités, le sol, le territoire, l'environnement, les droits de l'homme et leurs innombrables expressions culturelles et de vie. L'état du Pará (Amazonie Orientale) est, dernièrement, à la une des états dont les cas de conflits, meurtres, agressions, diffamations et, surtout, les menaces de mort contre les responsables et les défenseurs environnementaux. Alors, notre objectif est, tout naturellement, de quantifier, caractériser et réfléchir à propos des défenseurs environnementaux et les leaders menacés de mort, malgré leur statut de protection au Pará, Amazonie Orientale (entre 2014 et 2020). Nous cherchons aussi à identifier quelles sont les principales activités et les

¹ Dr. Jondison Cardoso Rodrigues, Postdoctoral Researcher, Graduate Program in Geography, Federal University of Para, Brazil. Email: [jondisoncardoso "at" gmail.com](mailto:jondisoncardoso@fcpa.br). Acknowledgements: the article referees, and the Amazon Foundation for the Support of Studies and Research (FAPESPA) for a research scholarship. Raione Lima Campos, Popular Lawyer, Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT), team agent from CPT Itaituba, Brazil, Email: [raione.lima "at" hotmail.com](mailto:raione.lima@hotmail.com). José Raimundo Santana, Popular Lawyer, Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT), team agent from CPT Itaituba, Pastoral Land Commission, Brazil, Email: [santana.jr "at" yahoo.com](mailto:santana.jr@cpa.br). Translation by Rafael Barbi.

principaux secteurs qui les menacent et les raisons pour lesquelles les menaces contre ces responsables environnementaux ont augmenté.

Mots clés: Amazonie, conflits, droits de l'homme et environnementaux, Pará

Resúmen

América Latina tiene una larga historia de actividades territoriales extractivas y explotadoras, que se remonta a la época colonial. Pero hubo un aumento acentuado de esas actividades y prácticas en América Latina en la última década, así como los conflictos socioambientales. Hay apuntamientos de vínculos entre exploración de recursos naturales y violación de derechos humanos, que se materializan en la escala de Amazonia en la ampliación de casos de expulsiones y despejo de familias, intentos de asesinatos, asesinatos, prisiones ilegales, intimidaciones y amenazas a líderes que se colocan a frente de esa lucha para defender los derechos de las colectividades, la tierra, al territorio, el medio ambiente, los derechos humanos y sus múltiples expresiones culturales y de vida. El estado de Pará (Amazonia Oriental) viene figurando en la última década como uno de los estados de Brasil con mayores incidencias de casos de conflictos de tierra, asesinatos, agresiones, difamaciones, además de amenazas de muerte directamente a líderes, a defensores ambientales. Junto a eso el objetivo es cuantificar, caracterizar y reflejar acerca de los defensores ambientales, líderes, amenazados de muerte y bajo protección en el estado de Pará, Amazonia Oriental (entre 2014 y 2020). Como también se busca identificar las principales actividades/sectores que amenazan y los motivos de las intensificaciones de amenazas a esos líderes.

Palabras-clave: Amazonia, conflictos. derechos humanos y ambientales, Pará

1. Introduction

Although Latin American countries have a long history of extraction, exploitation and spoliation of natural resources that dates back to the colonial era, there has been a steep increase in these activities in the region in the last decade, followed by an increase in socio-environmental conflicts (Raftopoulos, 2017; Svampa, 2019; Gudynas & Holloway, 2019; Parks, 2021). Many of these conflicts are linked to the appropriation of natural resources and expropriations promoted by the expansion of mining, monocultures, the oil industry and different forms of infrastructure (Gudynas & Holloway, 2019; Butt *et al.*, 2019; Frederiksen & Himley, 2020).

Along these lines rests the nexus between human rights violations and (large-scale) exploitation of natural resources (Bebbington *et al.*, 2018; Parks, 2021). In other words: as neoextractivist models and policies expand in Latin America, the cases of defamation, threats, intimidation, criminalization, assassination attempts, and killings of environmental, land and human rights defenders increases (Larsen *et al.*, 2021; Scheidel *et al.*, 2020; Zeng *et al.*, 2022). These individuals also suffer from the following situations of repression: arbitrary arrest and detention; judicial harassment; trumped-up charges and unfair trials; cyberattack and virtual lobbying (based on fake news); denial of the right to file police reports; sexual violence or sexual harassment; and surveillance and monitoring (Front Line Defenders, 2021). In addition they are sometimes accused of promoting internal conflict or division in communities.

For example, between 2002 and 2019, there were 1,922 assassinations in 57 countries (Larsen *et al.*, 2021). In 2019, 212 defenders were killed, making it deadliest year on record; an average of more than four people were murdered every week (Global Witness, 2021). It is important to emphasize that more than two thirds of these killings occurred in Latin America, with the Amazon Region accounting for almost 90% of the 24 deaths that occurred in Brazil in 2019 (Global Witness, 2021). Over the past three decades in Amazonia, there have been widespread land conflicts, resulting in over 1,000 murders, in which at least half of the Amazonian municipalities have faced at least one land conflict since 1985 (Aldrich *et al.*, 2020). Sobreiro Filho & Sodré (2021) report that of the 5,781 threats that occurred in Brazil from 1985 to 2019, 3,993 (69.07%) occurred in the Amazon. In comparative terms, the Amazon presents 13 times more cases of death threats than the Southern Region of Brazil and almost eight times those in the Southeastern Region. Within this context of severe death threats in Amazonia, 1,202 defenders were murdered from 1985 to 2019.

In the last decade, Pará, Eastern Amazon stands out as one of the Brazilian states with the highest incidence of land conflicts, murders, aggression, defamation and death threats against rural community leaders (CPT, 2021a). This configuration of persistent conflict and violence is the result of the racist, rent-seeking, and neoextractivist historical colonialist process in the region (Rodrigues, 2020). This historical

process has been repeated and amplified since the 2000s, reverberating in human rights violations and especially death threats against defenders (Rodrigues & Lima, 2020). Given this, the objective of this article is to quantify, characterize, and reflect on the environmental defenders and leaders suffering death threats, and those under protection in Pará (between 2014 and 2020). It also seeks to identify the main activities and sectors that threaten these leaders and why threats have intensified. It is important to document and systematically reflect on these patterns.

We seek to describe regional situations and dynamics. Additionally, we show that data on defenders suffering death threats in the state of Pará could be higher than reported, since they come from different protection and monitoring organizations. The current systematization is thus a way to make public a pattern of historical violence that has intensified in the Brazilian Amazon since the last decade of the 2000s.

Finally, we show the connections between socio-environmental conflicts (and human rights violations) with the expansion of neoextractivist processes across the region, and if the Brazilian State, with its authoritarian tendencies, acts as co-protagonist in such violence (Middeldorp & Le Billon, 2019). Thus, we highlight the nature of cycles of violence and the risks of death for those who fight daily for access to land and territory, and the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups and communities. We contribute towards global efforts to map and analyze the characteristics, the causes, and the perpetrators of environmental conflicts and killings (Middeldorp & Le Billon, 2019; Global Witness, 2021; Larsen *et al.*, 2021; Scheidel *et al.*, 2020).

The article is divided into six sections. We first describe the study area, locating the state of Pará within Brazil, and then provide details on our materials and methods. In the third section, there is a brief but indispensable explanation of the definition of Environmental Defenders. The first empirical section identifies and analyzes the Defenders under threat of death in Brazil, in the Legal Amazon, and in the State of Pará. The second identifies policies to protect defenders while quantifying and characterizing those "under protection." The last empirical section shows and connects economic activities and sectors with the intensification of death threats to environmental defenders over time.

2. Study area, materials and methods

Study area: the state of Pará

The state of Pará is one of the 27 federative units of Brazil. It is located in the northern region and is the second largest state in territorial extension (1,245,871 km²), the first being the state of Amazonas (1,559,168 km²) (IBGE, 2022). These two federative units, together with the states of Tocantins, Acre, Rondônia, Roraima, Amapá and part of Mato Grosso and Maranhão, form the Brazilian Amazon region, the Legal Amazon or *Amazônia Legal*² (Figure 1). Pará is bordered by the state of Amapá to the north, Roraima to the northwest, Amazonas to the west, Mato Grosso to the south, Tocantins to the southeast, and Maranhão to the east (Figure 1).

The integration regions of Pará state include 144 municipalities (IBGE, 2017), which together form an estimated population of 8,690,745 inhabitants (2020). This population, together with a multiplicity of species of flora, fauna, cultures, beliefs, ethnicities, religions, territorialities, cosmologies, knowledge, accents, landscapes, and relief, constitute an immense socio-ethno-cultural mosaic. Pará has some of the worst social indicators in Brazil, for: i) labor conditions and relations; ii) basic sanitation; iii) Human Development Index (HDI); iv) transportation and housing conditions, and combined with vi) highly concentrated land ownership with many rural conflicts (Aldrich *et al.*, 2020).

Pará annually ranks among the major Brazilian regions and states with the highest rates of deforestation, according to the National Institute for Space Research, INPE (INPE, 2022). Deforestation rates are related to historical patterns of environmental degradation, genocide and continuous expropriation, which is linked to an ongoing national ideological commitment to 'progress' (and to national territorial

² The area referred to as the Legal Amazon encompasses nine Brazilian states (Tocantins, Acre, Pará Amazonas, Rondônia, Roraima, Amapá and part of Mato Grosso and Maranhão) situated within Brazil. This categorization was instituted by the Brazilian government, via law number 1.806/1953, to group together regions with similar characteristics, with the intention of better planning the region's social and economic development. The Legal Amazon covers an area of 5,015,068 km², which corresponds to about 58.9% of the Brazilian territory.

integration). In the Brazilian Amazon, these narratives take the form of colonizing imaginaries of the arrival of progress (Urzedo & Chatterjee, 2021; Joanoni Neto & Guimarães Neto, 2021).

The state of Pará has also been the subject of plans for the construction of infrastructure megaprojects, mining operations, and grain monoculture. These have involved new actors in the region, new interests, and more disputes. Territorial meanings have shifted accordingly over time (Rodrigues, 2020; Rodrigues & Lima, 2020).



Figure 1: The state of Pará.

Materials and methods

Data sources for the analysis include:

- (i) the *Notebook of Conflicts in the Brazilian Countryside*³ (2014 to 2020) (CPT, 2015; 2016; 2017a; 2018; 2019; 2020a; 2021a);
- (ii) data and characteristics of Defenders threatened with death and under protection, from data granted by the Ministry of Women, Family and the State Secretary for Justice and Human Rights (SEJUDH), of the state of Pará⁴;
- (iii) *Atlas of conflicts in the Amazon* and the *Pan-Amazon atlas of socioterritorial conflicts* (both are produced for recording, denunciation and action) (CPT, 2020b);

³ The *Notebook of conflicts in the Brazilian countryside* (Caderno de Conflitos no Campo Brasil) is a report released annually since 1975 by the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT). It records, analyzes, and documents the conflicts involving rural workers and denounces the violence they suffer. Since 2011 it has been available on the CPT website: www.cptnacional.org.br. The CPT is an organization that covers the entire country and linked to the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (Conferência Nacional de Bispos do Brasil – CNBB) since its creation in June 1975. It was founded in the middle of the military dictatorship, as a response to the grave situation experienced by rural workers, squatters and peasants, especially in the Amazon, whose labor was exploited. They were subjected to conditions analogous to slave labor, and expelled from the lands they occupied. Thus, the CPT was created as a service to the cause of rural workers and to be a support to their organization.

⁴ Both information requested through the Citizen Information Service (Serviço de Informação ao Cidadão – SIC), with the respective processes, number: 00105.001371/2021-73 and 1875/2021.

- (iv) Participation (in conversation sessions and dialogues) in the seminar "Povos do Tapajós Construindo Resistência em Defesa da Amazônia" (Peoples of the Tapajós Building Resistance in Defense of Amazonia), held in Itaituba, in the southwest of Pará, 9-11 December, 2019. Conflicts, violence and threats were discussed involving several leaders whose lives were threatened;
- (v) A Public Letter produced from the same seminar.

It should be noted that the time frame is constrained by available and accurate data on leaders threatened with death and "under protection", between 2014 and 2020 (CPT, 2021a).

All analytical material is linked to, or dialogically rooted within, the theoretical contributions of political ecology. We argue that conflicts are associated or connected to broader processes, in which transformations and actions are crossed by unequal power relations (Prause & Le Billon, 2021). We also focus on important values such as social justice, environmental ethics, and human rights, particularly in relation to certain marginalized groups (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2009).

3. Environmental Defenders: A brief explanation and definition

Often the definition of environmental defenders – or human rights defenders, land or land and environment defenders, popular environmentalists or "community environmentalists" – has been associated with deaths and a long and tragic history of violence, conflicts and access to land and resources that is suppressed or unequal (Ghazoul & Kleinschroth, 2018; Verweijen *et al.*, 2021; Zeng *et al.*, 2022). Defenders are coincident with struggles, protests and complaints of criminalization, damage and socio-environmental conflicts (Birss, 2017; Temper *et al.*, 2018; Glazebrook & Opoku, 2018; Middeldorp & Le Billon, 2019; Prause & Le Billon, 2020; Le Billon & Lujala, 2020; Zeng *et al.*, 2022).

Bennett *et al.* (2015), emphasize that the term 'Defenders' is used to refer to a wide range of individuals and collectives promoting or protecting human rights. Butt *et al.* (2019), say defenders are "community activists, members of social movements, lawyers, journalists, NGO staffers, indigenous peoples, members of traditional, peasant, and agrarian communities, and those who resist forced eviction or other violent interventions" (Butt *et al.*, 2019, p. 742). They can be individuals or groups who, in their personal or professional capacity and in a peaceful manner, strive to protect and promote human rights related to the environment, including water, air, land, flora and fauna (Larsen *et al.*, 2021). The term tends to be invoked when those engaged in rights-related work or activities are threatened or put at risk by what they do. They are a great bulwark against environmental destruction and biodiversity loss resulting from unsustainable natural resource extraction (Zeng *et al.*, 2022).

Verweijen *et al.* (2021), states that "environmental defenders" resemble "human rights defenders." This means they are inscribed in the logic and language of human rights, which has its origins in the European Enlightenment. Among the many criticisms of this project are its universalizing, Eurocentric tendencies and its liberal individualism. The notion of "environmental defenders" is sometimes used in this frame, individualizing and personifying territorial struggles. However not all human rights discourses and practices are caught up with these tendencies. Moreover, human rights discourses and practices make a significant contribution by being: i) recognized as having a globally emancipatory potential; ii) a source of hope and aspirations for a better future; iii) builders of counter-hegemonic human rights theory and practice (Verweijen *et al.*, 2021). Environmental defenders can therefore have recognition and status within the international human rights framework through which individuals can access support, protection and redress for violations. Being called an environmental or human rights defender in some cases inadvertently ends up increasing risks and threats; it can also be used to politicize defenders' work, criminalizing their practices and leadership actions (Bennett *et al.*, 2015; Verweijen *et al.*, 2021).

Defenders are as also defined as individuals or groups who fight for more sustainable forms of subsistence and traditional forms of environmental conservation, potentially contributing to slowing down the rate of environmental degradation and water pollution, production waste, and greenhouse gas emissions (Le Billon & Lujala, 2020). Sheidel *et al.* (2020) also state that Defenders are individuals and collectives who protect the environment and protest against unfair and unsustainable resource use. This may include indigenous people, peasants, or fishers whose lives and livelihoods may be threatened by environmental change or expropriation, as well as environmental activists, social movements, journalists, or anyone else

who actively defends the environment and puts themselves at violent conflict and risk of death (Zeng *et al.*, 2022).

Defenders not only face intimidation and various forms of violence, but also serious environmental, health, and cultural impacts (Navas *et al.*, 2018). They may be persecuted, intimidated, assaulted, or even murdered for opposing neextractivist activities, in retaliation for their activism and social leadership (Merino & Quispe-Dávila, 2021). They can also be considered shapers of critical consciousness regarding the risks and effects of "development projects" and corporate and state actions, mainly in regard to health, the environment, lands, territories, way of life, territorialities, food sovereignty, and rights (cultural, territorial, and recognition rights). These perspectives transcend the defense of nature and the equitable use of resources (Le Billon & Lujala, 2020; Larsen *et al.*, 2020). Supporting the "collective use of common goods" is particularly important in the face of a "global land rush" (Dell'Angelo, 2021; Sändig, 2021).

An important actor in Pará is the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT, Comissão Pastoral da Terra). It is part of the Brazilian Catholic Church and has supported marginalized and persecuted people since the 1970s. It has clashed with the state and landowners, denouncing the use of violence against the rural poor and offering them a variety of services. The groups and communities supported by the CPT have their own attributes, based on their culture and their varied ways of life. They consist of: riverside dwellers, indigenous people, *quilombo* peoples⁵, extractivists, coconut breakers (*quebradeiras*), smallholders, artisanal fisherfolk and other rural workers. These groups face daily difficulties in their own territories.

4. Defenders threatened with death in Brazil, the Legal Amazon, and the state of Pará

The relationship between socio-environmental conflicts, extractivism, and human rights violations in Brazil and Latin America is undeniable (Raftopoulos, 2017). It is also undeniable that the globalization of mass consumption and the rise of Asian economies have further increased the demand for land and natural resources, with stimuli for the extension of "extraction frontiers" and aggravating the conditions for socio-environmental conflicts (Larsen *et al.*, 2020), as well as increased pollution, loss of territories, and increased social inequalities.

All of these expansions have contributed and are contributing to an escalation of conflicts and greater resistance. More defenders are threatened with death in Brazil as values and logics clash (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Prause & Le Billon, 2020). It is estimated that for every defender killed, there are between 20 and 100 others threatened, illegally imprisoned, sued for defamation or suffering intimidation (Larsen *et al.*, 2021). This means that the data available probably underestimates true numbers, as many defenders do not report the threats they experience, or conceal them out of fear or to protect their families' safety. According to Grant & Le Billon (2021), this occurs because the perpetrators are most often granted impunity and because social protection regarding human rights is nonexistent.

Between 2014 and 2020, according to the Pastoral Land Commission's *Notebook of conflicts in the countryside*, Brazil had 1,277 leaders who received death threats (Figure 2 and Table 1). In the Amazon, 955 leaders were threatened during the same period. Therefore, almost 73% of all threats to these leaders in Brazil are located in the Legal Amazon, an important point to note and a sad reality (CPT, 2015; 2016; 2017a; 2017b, 2018; 2019; 2020a, 2020b; 2021a).

The Defenders under threat in the Legal Amazon are mainly: Leaders, Indigenous leaders, Indigenous people, land squatters, settlers, riverside dwellers, coconut breakers, *quilombo* leaders, *quilombolas*, fishermen, landless people, religious authorities, lawyers, civil servants, extractivists, rubber tappers, pastoral agents, union leaders, and rural workers (Table 1). These groups of individuals or groups of people are involved in struggles that unite community, territory, environmental concerns, wildlife and animals, and livelihoods (Le Billon & Lujala, 2020; Verweijen *et al.*, 2021).

A significant number (31%) of the defenders threatened with death are again made up of traditional populations (Indigenous, riverside dwellers, coconut breakers, *Quilombolas*, fishers, extractivists and rubber tappers) (Figure 2). They are culturally differentiated groups that call themselves 'traditional' populations, who not only have their own forms of social organization but also occupy and use territories and natural resources as part of their cultural, social, religious, ancestral, and economic reproduction. They

⁵ *Quilombolas* are Afro-Brazilian peoples, many of whom are the descendants of African slaves brought to work on plantations before abolition in the late 1800s.

occupy and use territories and natural resources through the knowledge, innovations, and practices generated and transmitted by tradition. Such an ontology and relational political ecology of life guides many struggles, and it does this through meanings, norms, knowledge, identity, authority, and discourses (Boelens *et al.*, 2016). It also guides a "defense" against dangers and violence (Verweijen *et al.*, 2021). Practices and actions, then, overlap with a temporal environmental activism (environmentalism or conservationism⁶) and new forms of citizenship, identity, governance, and the rise of socio-environmentalism as part of a new "politics" from below (Hecht, 2011). Thus, environmental or territorial defenses are complex, involving more than struggles over access and use of natural resources alone in the face of predatory expansion over the Amazon region (Bolaños, 2011).

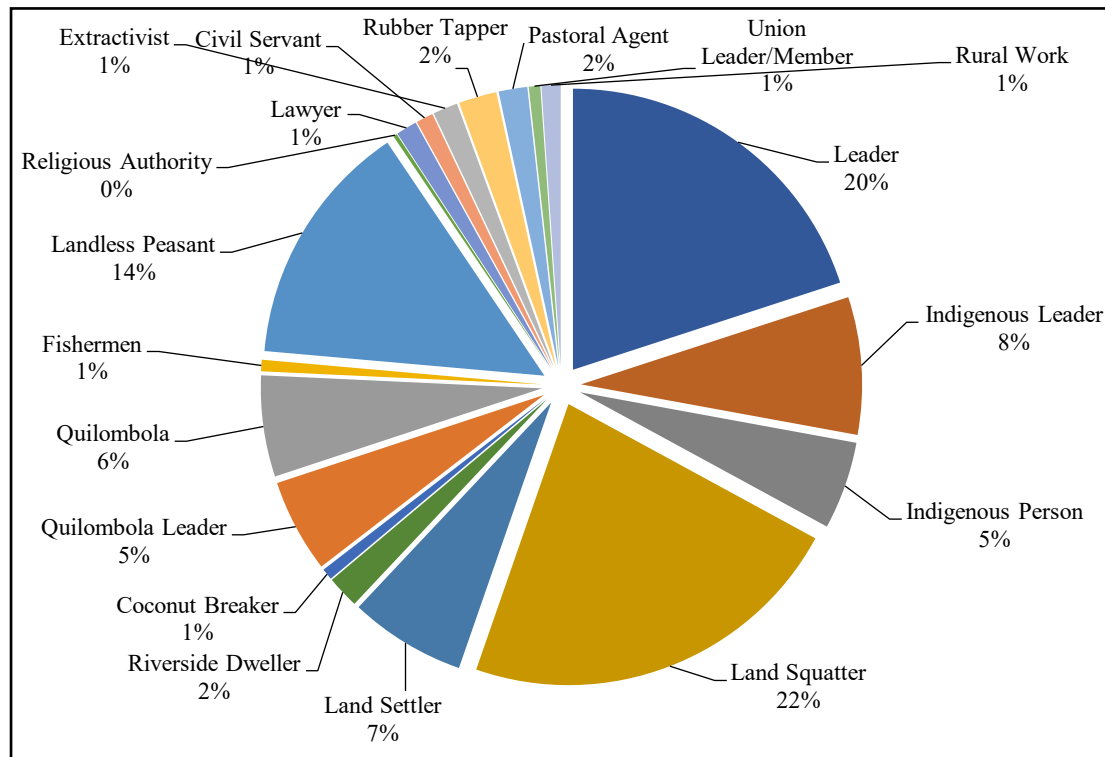


Figure 2: Percentage of leaders under threat of death in the Legal Amazon between 2014 and 2020. Source: compiled from CPT (2015; 2016; 2017a; 2018; 2019; 2020a; 2021a)

Over the same period (2014 to 2020), the state of Pará reported 261 leaders under threat of death. This represents, respectively, 27.32% and 20.43% of the cases in the legal Amazon and across Brazil. In the state of Pará, the defenders have the same profile as in the Amazon region, being formed predominantly from traditional populations living in rural areas (Figure 3 and Table 2).⁷

These data converge with the number of conflicts over land in the state of Pará, where in 2020 alone, there were 189 conflicts involving traditional populations, out of a total of 245: indigenous (53.46%), *quilombolas* (15.91%), extractivists (3.67%), riverine peoples (2.44%) (CPT, 2020a). Conflicts are concentrated in these groups, because it is here that territorial defense struggles are most pronounced. Struggles over land are also social: territory affirms the political, social and identity status of communities and groups. The construction of a "homogeneous world" (based on so-called neoliberal globalization with

⁶ For Verweijen *et al.* (2021), the French term, "*défenseurs de l'environnement*", is commonly used to refer to environmentalists and conservationists in French-speaking countries.

⁷ Here we are accounting for those defenders who live in the countryside, since there are also defenders in urban areas. Thus, it refers to the reality of defenders in rural areas.

individualistic identities) suffocates the ontological attachments that are part of non-dualistic alternative cosmovisions, with their network of interrelations and materialities (Escobar, 2015, 2020).⁸

Categories	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Leader	34	21	47	36	19	25	-
Indigenous Leader	7	2	19	13	10	21	-
Indigenous Person	5	7	15	1	3	7	8
Land Squatter	27	4	11	40	37	51	34
Land Settler	15	6	11	7	10	5	7
Riverside Dweller	4	-	7	-	1	3	2
Coconut Breaker	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Quilombo Leader	8	5	22	8	3	3	-
Quilombola	6	1	2	23	6	8	7
Fishermen	-	-	-	4	-	-	2
Landless Peasant	8	17	12	32	19	5	29
Religious Authority	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Lawyer	1	2	2	3	2	-	1
Civil Servant	7	-	1	1	-	-	-
Extractivist	-	8	1	3	-	1	-
Rubber Tapper	-	1	-	-	-	12	7
Pastoral Agent	2	2	2	3	4	-	2
Union	1	2	1	1	1	-	-
Leader/Member							
Rural Worker	4	1	3	-	1	1	-

Table 1: Main categories of defenders under threat of death in the Legal Amazon from 2014 to 2020. Source: CPT (2015; 2016; 2017a; 2018; 2019; 2020a; 2021a)

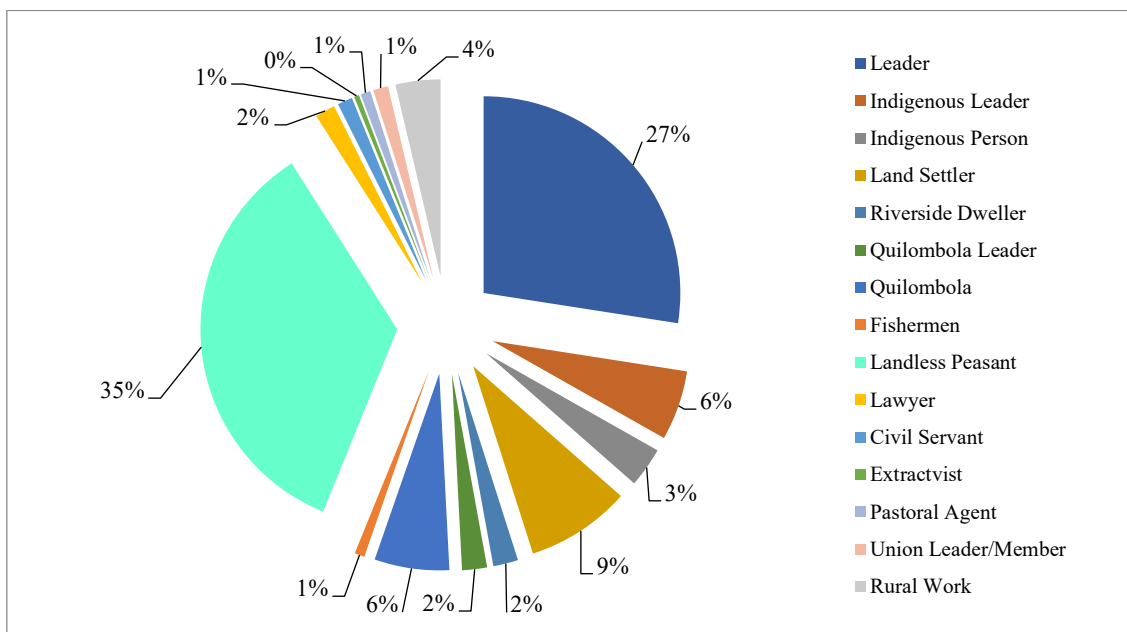


Figure 3: Percentage of leaders threatened by death in Pará state between 2014 and 2020. Source: elaborated from CPT data (2015; 2016; 2017a; 2018; 2019; 2020a; 2021)

⁸ For Escobar (2015) the "dualistic ontology" is a rationality or thinking that separates human and nonhuman, nature and culture, individual and community, 'us' and 'them', mind and body, secular and sacred, reason and emotion. As well as hierarchizing, above all, the human over the non-human.

This concentration of defenders under death threat in the state of Pará is similar to the percentage of defenders that constitute traditional populations in the Legal Amazon. They represent 19.15% of the total number of defenders who fight for the possibility to continue occupying and using their territories and living through their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction. Thus, such acts of defense are not restricted to unequal distribution of natural resources (Larsen *et al.*, 2021; Scheidel *et al.*, 2020; Verweijen *et al.*, 2021; Zeng *et al.*, 2021), but, above all, threats to land and territory and forms of social reproduction (CPT, 2017b). There are also major issues of negligence by the state regarding social protection and affirmation of rights (Rapoza, 2021; Ferrante & Fearnside, 2021, 2022; Ferrante *et al.*, 2021; Villén-Pérez *et al.*, 2022).

Categories	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Leader	10	13	6	13	12	13	-
Indigenous Leader	4	1	-	1	4	4	-
Indigenous Person	2	-	-	-	-	-	6
Land Settler	-	6	6	-	2	3	4
Riverside Dweller	-	-	1	-	1	3	-
<i>Quilombo</i> Leader	2	-	-	-	2	1	-
<i>Quilombola</i>	2	-	-	-	5	3	5
Fishermen	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Landless peasant	5	11	5	25	17	-	22
Lawyer	-	1	-	1	2	-	-
Civil Servant	2	-	1	-	-	-	-
Extractivist	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Pastoral Agent	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Union Leader/Member	1	1	-	-	1	-	-
Rural Worker	4	1	2	-	1	1	-

Table 2: General typology of leaders under threat of death in Pará state (2014-2020). Source: CPT (2015; 2016; 2017a; 2018; 2019; 2020a; 2021a)

When we add the effort of groups seeking access to property and permanence on the land (landless and settler groups, 40.61%) to the struggle of these defenders, the total constitutes 65% of defenders who are threatened with death Pará state, from 2014 to 2020. Violence against defenders is part of a long history of colonization, expropriation of local communities as well as the exploitation of environmental resources (Larsen *et al.*, 2021). In this context, the Amazon was the experimental ground for actions guided by the narrative of "national integration", aimed at incorporating the Amazon region into the national economy; this was done by building roads, offering land to poor migrants, and promoting mining, logging, agriculture, and cattle ranching opportunities (Abers *et al.*, 2017). These narratives of integration have their own dynamic in Brazil, and they are strongly connected not only to ongoing economic and social inequalities, but also to recent large-scale agrarian land acquisition for speculative purposes (Dell'Angelo, 2021; Sändig, 2021).

For Larsen *et al.* (2021), the challenges of violence for the different types of defenders are multifaceted, but systemic and patterned, raising important questions about how to address the underlying factors and to respond effectively. Responding adequately would involve protection measures adopted at a national scale, and here our characterization and analysis of the advocates for protection is useful to signal to various national and international policies.

5. Defenders under protection: Protection policies, and quantification and characterization of environmental defenders

Several countries have passed laws, decrees and programs established for protection of environmental and human rights defenders. These include Colombia, Mexico, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Honduras, Peru and Brazil (Bennett, 2015; Larsen *et al.*, 2021). These laws aim for the creation of

improved policy frameworks to promote greater protection (Scheidel *et al.*, 2020). In Brazil, this process began in 2004 with the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (*Programa de Proteção aos Defensores de Direitos Humanos – PPDDH*), based on the demands of human rights organizations that pointed to the construction of an effective public policy for the protection and confrontation of situations that may generate threats to defenders (COMITEDDH, 2021).

However, in terms of policy, the protection of defenders' human rights was only instituted by the Presidential Decree nº. 6.044, of February 12, 2007, as a way to establish principles and directives to protect defenders' human rights. Other efforts were needed, namely: the jointly executed and articulated performance of all the spheres of government and civil society working towards the protection of defenders and towards the struggles that generate states of risk or vulnerability. The Protection Policy has been implemented in nine states in the country (Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Espírito Santo, Ceará, Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, Maranhão, and Pará), but it has been discontinued due to changes in state administrations. Regional Protection Programs for Human Rights Defenders are still being implemented in the states of Amazonas and Rio Grande do Sul, Rondônia and Mato Grosso do Sul (Terras de Direitos, 2021).

In 2009, Decree No. 7.037, which approves the National Human Rights Program, presented guidelines, courses of action, deadlines and the resources needed to implement it. However in April 2016, Decree No. 8.724, instituted the reformulation of the Deliberative Council, not allowing for the participation of civil society in the National Coordination of the Program. This was a clear way to demobilize civil society and silence critics, because despite the state's commitment to human rights treaties, at the same time it continued to commit serious human rights violations, and civil society participation would represent constant pressure on states to comply with international human rights standards (Bakke *et al.*, 2020).

Decree No. 8,724 was in effect until 2019, when it was revoked by Decree No. 9,937, which establishes the Program for the Protection Of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists and the Deliberative Council of the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists under the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights. Civil society participation is now possible, with organizations able to be invited to compose the thematic working groups or start temporary commissions (Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos, 2019).

In Pará state, this policy was implemented through the creation of Law No. 8,444 of December 6, 2016, which establishes the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of the State of Pará and creates the State Council for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Secretaria de Estado de Justiça e Direitos Humanos, 2016). The main objective of this Program is to implement and guarantee measures to protect the life and physical integrity of Defenders who have their rights violated or are under death threats due to their activity, purpose, or performance in the State of Pará. It also seeks to provide assistance and monitoring cases of violations against defenders.

Quantification and characterization of defenders under protection

According to the data requested to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights until April 2021 there were 516 defenders who came under death threats, as included in the Protection Program for Human Rights Defenders (PPDDH).⁹ Between 2014 and 2020 there were changes to the annual numbers, with requests for inclusion and disengagements from the Program (Figure 4 and 5).

The percentage of the total coming from the states of the Brazilian Amazon has fluctuated from 70.56% (in 2014) to 41.34% (in 2020). However, the PPDDH data are incomplete, as State Protection Programs have been running autonomously, in the states of Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Bahia, Pará, Ceará and Maranhão. And this data is not illustrated on Figure 4 and 5.

⁹ Work of Terra de Direitos (2021) organization, using data made available by the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights in March 2021, regarding the amount of cases included in the PPDDH in the interval from 2009 to 2021, reveal a total of 209 cases.

NUMBER OF DEFENDERS INCLUDED IN THE PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPDDG) BY STATE AN YEAR (2014-2017)

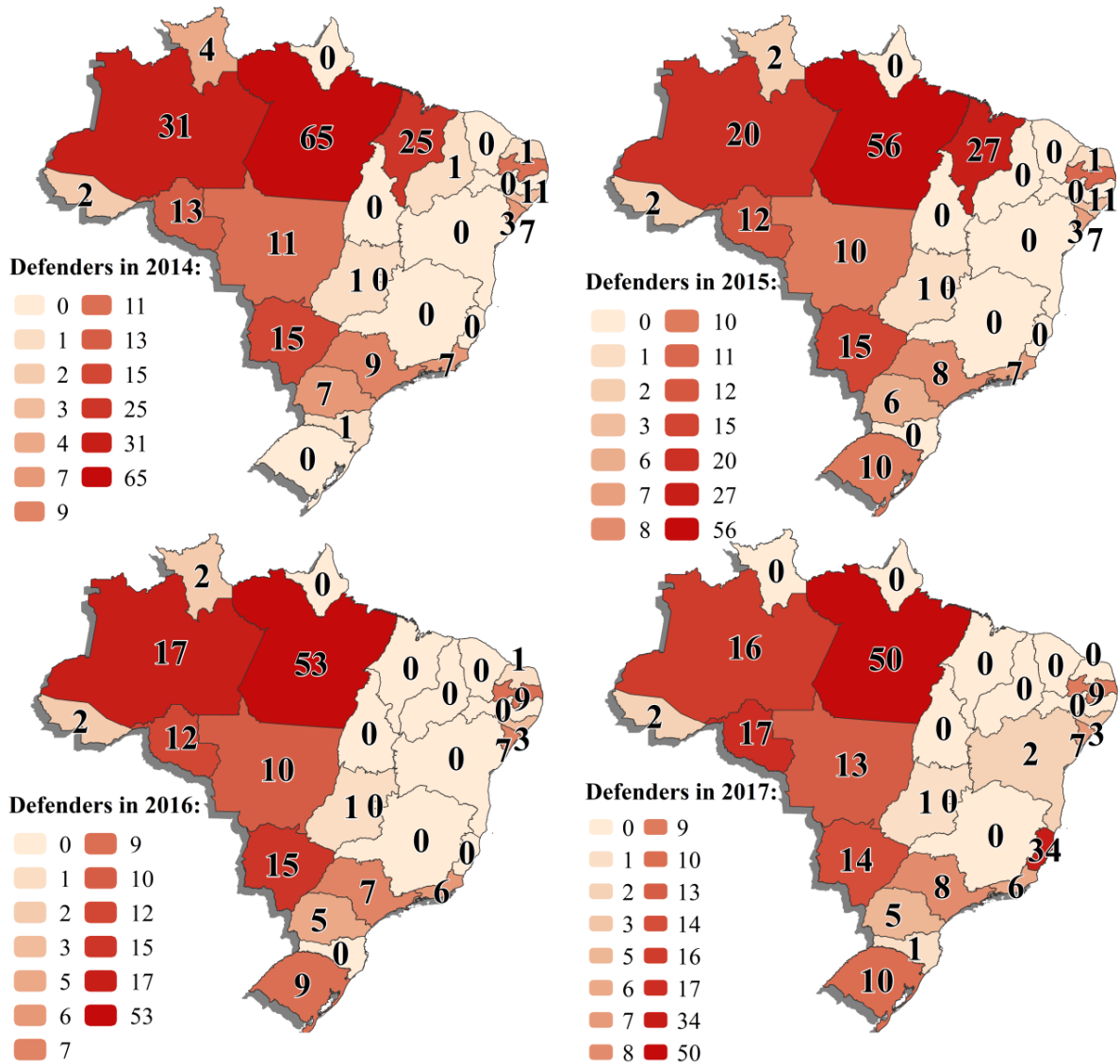


Figure 4: Number of Defenders included in the PPDDH by state and year (2014-2017). Source: Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights

According to data from the State Secretary for Justice and Human Rights (SEJUDH), from 2014 to 2020 the state of Pará had 61 defenders come under death threats and included in the state program for human rights defenders. However, by the end of 2020, there were 78 cases being followed, with 50 cases being men, 13 of them under analysis, and 28 cases women, 11 of them still under analysis. Women are now more central to environmental defense campaigns, rather than being marginal, or concealed by aggregate data (Tran *et al.*, 2020; Tran, 2021). In some cases they are central to campaigning against rights violations, becoming the main targets and most vulnerable to violence, prejudice, exclusion and repudiation, and sexual violence. Efforts to discipline and punish women are strategic, and their status and position in family and community networks means they may be less able to challenge the dominant development model (Deonandan & Bell, 2019).

NUMBER OF DEFENDERS INCLUDED IN THE PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPDDG) BY STATE AN YEAR (2018-2020)

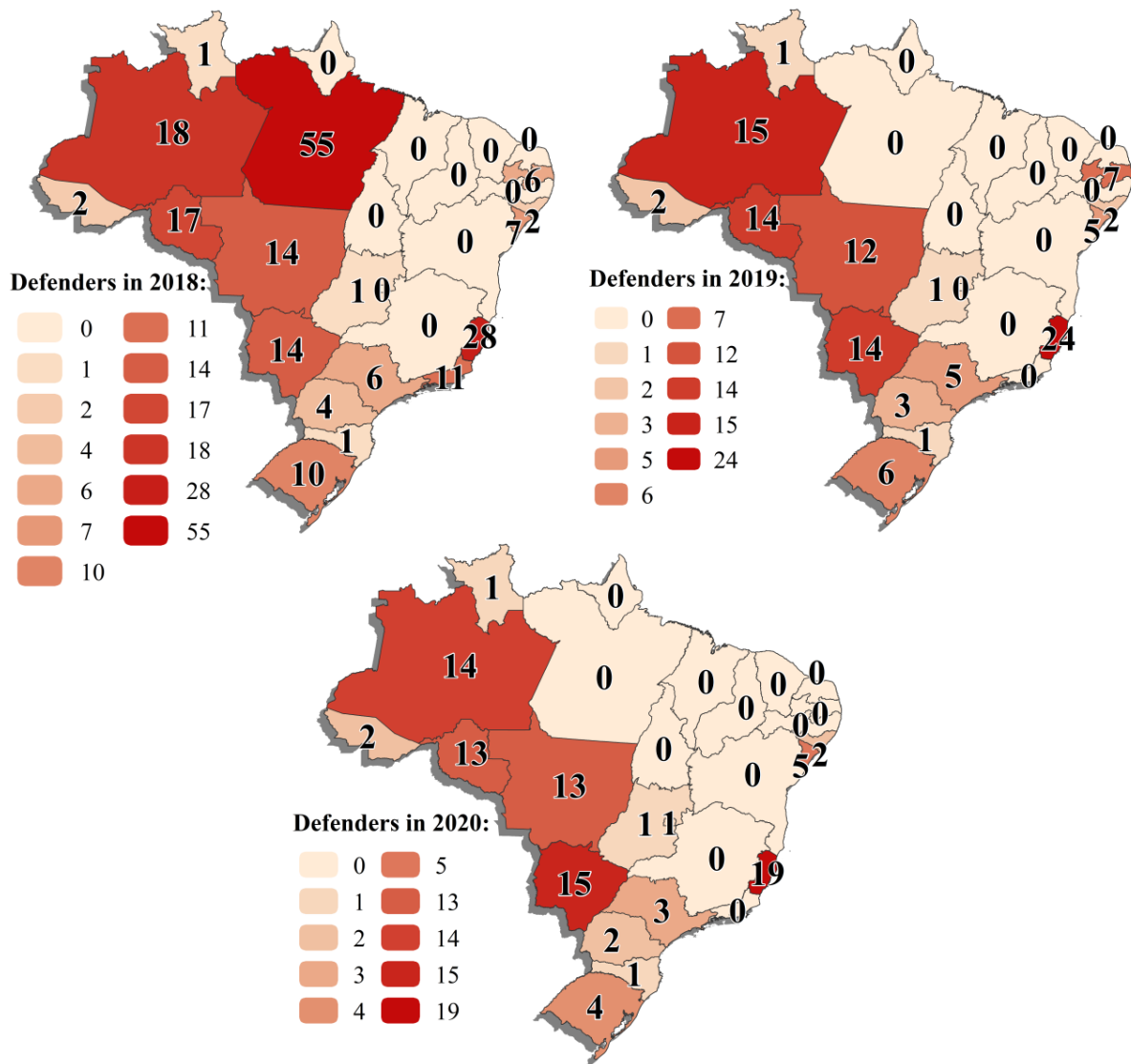


Figure 5: Number of Defenders included in the PPDDH by state and year (2018-2020).
Source: Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights

The age group of the human rights defenders in the state program of Pará is predominantly between 45 and 59 years of age, totaling 39 cases in this range. There are also: i) 18 cases in the 25 to 44 age group, 4 of which are under analysis; ii) 7 cases in the 60 to 69 age group; and iii) 3 over 70. Age was not revealed by some participants in the program. These age groups suffer from "slow violence", the important factor being incremental and cumulative effects over time, particularly for the poor (Nixon, 2011; Navas *et al.*, 2018).

With regard to race in the state program, the majority self-declare as black or *pardo*¹⁰: black people amount to 5 cases under analysis and 9 already included; and 14 self-declare as *pardo*, with 5 cases under

¹⁰ *Pardo* generally refers to those with Amerindian, African and European heritage.

analysis and 9 included. There are 5 self-declared white people, 1 under analysis and 4 included. Indigenous peoples are 8 cases, 3 under analysis and 5 included. These characteristics conform a marker or indicator of direct and forceful violence against black populations and that are related to colonial and racist violence.

Despite the diversity seen across age groups, social groups, gender, color and race according to information from the State Secretary for Justice and Human Rights (SEJUDH), in the state of Pará (from 2014 to 2020), activism has a rural basis, totaling 72 of the 78 cases accompanied by the program of human rights defenders. This is clearly linked to the social history of violence as a strategy to enable capitalist expansion and control over territories and regions in the Amazon (Aldrich *et al.*, 2020).

It is worth noting that in 2018, the National Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (PPDDH) underwent an official name change, becoming the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Communicators, and Environmentalists. While this may seem positive, after almost two decades the program has not received support and since 2019 it has been threatened by the national Bolsonaro government. These threats are contrary to democracy and extremely hostile to the struggle for human rights (Terra de Direitos, 2021). Also since 2019, there has been little government action to reduce the risk to human rights defenders, or to protect them through financial support or social programs.¹¹ In addition to changing the PPDDH, the government, through a political agenda aligned with powerful economic actors, threatens the lives of subjects struggling for their rights (Terra de Direitos, 2021). The government has encouraged of the criminalization of leaders, especially those fighting for land, land reform, and recognition and respect for traditionally occupied territories. As Rocha & Barbosa Jr. (2018) say, Brazil has been experiencing a daily imposition of political authority, based on the paradigm of threat and control of the current order. At the same time, political authority has been monopolized. The disqualification, persecution, and coercion of dissent has become a political tactic to ensure political governmentality and the interests of hegemonic groups.

Despite the fact that the PPDDH still lacks a legal framework or solid public backing, financial support for implementation, for all the reasons presented it is indispensable (and continues to function), not only for the protection of lives, but also to legitimize forms of just and legitimate resistance. The PPDDH is certainly suffering a period of instability (political and financial) and its continuity in question. The threats are clearly related to a developmentalist economic agenda, based on a primary commodities export policy that the government argues is a "consensus." But these types of policies are based on the appropriation and exploitation of nature, and clearly create widespread environmental degradation (Dorn & Huber, 2020) as well as extractivist violence across Latin America (Gudynas, 2019; Svampa, 2019). In Brazil, there is an unhealthy convergence between the commodity boom, neextractivist policy, and the amplification of territorial conflicts and death threats.

6. Activities/sectors and the intensification of defender threats

The increase in defenders threatened coincides with the commodity boom: a period marked by the sharp rise in commodity prices particularly from 2000-2014 for food, oil, metals, and energy. For some authors this boom helped advance a political agenda for combating poverty and inequality; however, it also resulted in a trail of violence and environmental injustices in Brazil affecting rural communities, notably, traditional and indigenous communities and populations (Arsel *et al.*, 2016; Sauer, 2018; Svampa, 2019; Prause & Le Billon, 2020).

Raftopoulos (2017) states that natural resource exploitation and the increasing number of large-scale mega-development projects in the region have made Latin America one of the most dangerous places for defenders. This is because of the sharp increase in these activities on the continent over the last decade or so, coupled with strong international demand for raw materials and a cycle of high prices. The proliferation of extractive activities and expansion into new areas has significantly impacted the fulfillment of human rights throughout Latin America, and become an ongoing driver of socio-environmental conflicts (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Le Billon & Sommerville, 2017, Prause & Le Billon, 2020).

¹¹ This reduction in funds was realized through the approval of Decree No. 9937/2019 (Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos 2019), in its art. 2: "§ 1 Technical cooperation agreements, covenants, adjustments, or terms of partnership may be entered into with the states, the Federal District, and with public and private entities and institutions with a view to implementing the PPDDH" (Terra de Direitos, 2021).

Butt *et al.* (2019) also show that conflicts over natural resources are linked to different resources and/or sectors (for example: fossil fuels, minerals, timber, agriculture, aquaculture, and water), leading to appropriation, expropriation, and control of territories. Displacement occurs with direct threats or use of physical violence, and there are many cases of forced labor, pollution, and denial of territorial and indigenous rights (see also Le Billon & Middeldorp, 2021; Ferrante & Fearnside, 2021, 2022; Rorato *et al.*, 2022; Villén-Pérez *et al.*, 2022). Agribusiness and mining are the main sectors that act as sources of conflicts, since they affect existing identities identity production – they grab or hoard land (Aguilar-Støen, 2016). They are opposed by everyday actions and discourses (Grant & Le Billon, 2019).

The *Atlas of Pan-Amazonian socioterritorial conflicts* points out that agribusiness (soy, cotton, oil palm and eucalyptus plantations) is responsible for 43% of the conflicts across Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. The figure is 60% in Brazil (CPT, 2020b). In the state of Pará, agribusiness accounts for half of all conflicts, and mining another 20% (CPT, 2020b). Sub-regionally, in southeastern Pará, approximately 80% of the land surveyed for mining lies within lands occupied by settlers, *quilombolas*, indigenous peoples and in protected areas (CPT, 2017b), with a significant number of murders and death threats (Sobreiro Filho & Sodr , 2021) as well as deforestation (Aldrich *et al.*, 2020).

In a context where crises are spreading (Dietz & Engels, 2020), networks are being built to maintain corporate territorialization, using violence, and to expand it to other areas where illegal occupation of common land takes place (Dell'Angelo *et al.*, 2021). Other infrastructure projects are in receipt of support from banks and other funds (Rodrigues & Lima, 2020). These investments in mining and agriculture have increased considerably over the last two decades, especially in Latin America (Prause & Le Billon, 2020), and resistance to large-scale agro-industrial and mining projects has grown. Jair Bolsonaro labeled non-governmental organizations and activists as terrorists before his election, and wanted to relax gun laws and environmental protection. This built a rhetoric to undermine and repress those in disagreement with the political regime, which continued into 2019.¹²

A logic of violence was present in the power to exploit natural resources, making use of criminalization, intimidation, and encouraging polarization and divisions of leaders and communities Correa-Salazar *et al.* (2021). There are important parallels with the Philippines, according to Dressler (2021a, 2021b) where the election of President Rodrigo Duterte generated authoritarian, punitive, and violent populist agendas that intensifies with the COVID-19 pandemic: the country also experienced a suppression of rights, the dismantling of environmental protections, and the acceleration of resource extraction.

The seminar "Povos do Tapaj s Construindo Resist ncia em defesa da Amaz nia" was held in Itaituba, Southwestern Par , between December 9 and 11, 2019. There was an atmosphere of fearfulness, and concerns that the seminar could be shut down at any moment (even though it had not been publicized). Participants noted the widespread rhetoric of violence incited and legitimized by President Bolsonaro (Rodrigues, 2020; Deutsch, 2021; Deutsch & Fletcher, 2022). There were at least 115 community leaders of the Tapaj s (defenders), who were startled and distressed by the political climate. Among these leaders were social movements, rural pastoral ministries, smallholders, riverside dwellers, fishermen and fisherwomen, indigenous, small-scale extractivists, urban and rural women's movements, *quilombolas*, and settlers from the various communities and villages of the municipalities of Rur polis, Trair o, Novo Progresso, Itaituba and Santar m. These municipalities had already experienced violence (CPT, 2021b). Several participants had already received death threats, which they reported as sanctioned by the State, which had not resolved existing conflicts. In addition, they reported human rights violations and the negative socio-environmental effects of large infrastructure projects like existing ports (for the multinationals Bunge, Cargill and ADM) and planned ones (the Ferrogr o railroad, more ports, hydroelectric dams and small hydroelectric plants) and mining concessions (Rodrigues, 2021).

¹² A very common strategy in authoritarian states as a way to demobilize civil society and silencing its critics (Middeldorp & Le Billon, 2019; Bakke *et al.*, 2020; Deutsch, 2021).

Leaders have of course been building resistance, based on the construction of their own networks of cooperation and co-collaboration. They have been challenging "development of narratives"¹³, and producing and strengthening collective consciousness among subaltern groups, focusing on alternative policies and models. Rewriting their own paths means not allowing rules and norms for their territory to be "developed" elsewhere (Leitheiser *et al.*, 2021). The resulting Public Letter was produced and signed by twenty-three organizations and social movements in the Seminar:

Through this Letter we denounce the situation of violence in the countryside, the persecutions and constant death threats against human rights defenders. In this region, there are 16 people are under threat, and the purchase and sale of public lands in the settlement projects is occurring. We highlight the violence committed in the Monte Cristo Community, Settlement Araipacupu, in the municipality of Rurópolis, by a group of gunmen under orders from farmers who expelled smallholders from their own lands during a shootout. Approximately 12 families were expelled and about 21 children witnessed all this violence. Then, they set fire to houses and destroyed all production, and until now, no measures have been taken to enable the retaking of the land by the farming families. We denounce the violations that the Munduruku indigenous people have been suffering, from death threats to persecution of indigenous leaders, invasion of the Sai Cinza and Munduruku [Indigenous lands] by loggers and miners. In addition to a whole process of defamation undertaken by these farmers and some politicians in the municipality of Itaituba, who have spread lies about the Munduruku people, saying that they want to take the lands of farmers and other traditional communities (CPT, 2021b).

We denounce the way the Bolsonaro government has positioned itself in relation to the Amazon, especially with its speeches for the legalization of informal mining in Indigenous Lands, its intention manifested in social networks to reduce the Conservation Areas and the encouragement of criminality in the countryside with the support of Minister of Justice, Sérgio Moro. We also point out, as a consequence of Bolsonaro's policies, the increase in femicide that also affects Amazonian women. We also denounce the attempts of criminalization and smear campaigns against Non-Governmental Organizations – NGOs, committed to the social struggle, and social movements in Tapajós by the public authorities with the support of President Bolsonaro. We denounce public and private companies, national and transnational capital, responsible for large logistics infrastructure projects for violating the Right to prior, free and informed consultation and the harassment of impacted communities. In this sense, we demand that the Federal Audit Court (TCU) consider the ILO Convention n. 169 in the Ferrogrão Railroad process. (CPT, 2021b)

Many of the Letter's reflections, as well as those of the Seminar, were expressed in terms of: i) legal violations by public and private companies (national and transnational); ii) the precariousness of environmental agencies (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources/IBAMA; the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation/ICMBIO¹⁴), with a reduction in the budget for inspection and firefighting; iii) the loss of the Special Secretary for Climate Change of the Ministry of Environment; iv) the halting of the demarcation of indigenous and *quilombola* lands and agrarian reform

¹³ For Prause & Le Billon (2021), narrative development is the construction of strategic stories by resistance movements to articulate claims or grievances, promote the interests of the resisting group, and oppose the narratives of their antagonists.

¹⁴ IBAMA is a Brazilian federal institution created in 1989 and connected to the Ministry of the Environment. IBAMA's goal is to execute the actions of national environmental policies, referring to the federal attributions, related to environmental licensing, environmental quality control, natural resources use authorization, and environmental supervision, monitoring, and control. The ICMBIO is a Brazilian federal institution created in 2007 and connected to the Ministry of Environment, whose goal is to propose, implement, manage, protect, supervise, and monitor territorial spaces and their environmental resources, with relevant natural features, created and protected by the government with conservation objectives. ICMBIO also seeks to stimulate and carry out biodiversity research, protection, preservation, and conservation programs.

policies; iv) the criminalization and defamation campaigns against NGOs; v) the support for illegal mining on Indigenous Lands (TIs); and, vi) the destructuring of INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform), especially the regional superintendency of Santarém (SR30).

The fallout from these measures has been discussed by Araújo (2020), Thomaz *et al.* (2020), Barbosa *et al.* (2021), Menezes & Barbosa Jr. (2021), Rodrigues & Kalil (2021), Rapozo (2021), Pelicice & Castello (2021), Souza *et al.* (2021) and Deutsch & Fletcher (2022). Dismantling of environmental governance in Brazil is not merely a rhetorical and ideological mechanism conducted by a national political group, but a political tactic designed to legitimize the promotion of "total neoextractivism" (Buzogány & Mohamad-Klotzbach, 2021) and the economic and political support of neoextractivist agents for hegemonic political groups.

In addition, it was observed in 2019 that in the Amazon, 10,129 km² of forest were cut down, an increase of 34% compared to 2018 (7,536 km²). In 2020, deforestation corresponded to 11,088 km². This represents an increase of 47% and 9.5% compared to 2018 and 2019, respectively, and is the highest rate of the decade (Silva Junior *et al.*, 2021). This is seen in the deforestation rates in the Legal Amazon, with the highest deforestation rate concentrated in the state of Pará (INPE, 2022). As documented, forest fires in the Amazon, western Pará state in August 2019 accelerated forest destruction and led to international repercussions (Kröger, 2020; Menezes & Barbosa Jr., 2021; Rapozo, 2021, Deutsch & Fletcher, 2022).

With the support and legitimization of the Brazilian state power which has completely changed the Brazilian environmental structure, neoextractivist activity (mining and agribusiness) face less constraints on approvals and activities (Menezes & Barbosa Jr., 2021). For Rodrigues & Kalil (2021), it is the rolling out of an ecological and political and economic approach by the Bolsonaro government. From the ideological point of view, the government expresses climate change denial and argues that environmental destruction is necessary for social development. From a political and economic perspective, it has simply sought to satisfy the agribusiness and mining sector (with its legal and illegal elements) that are important political forces in the Brazilian National Congress (Rodrigues & Kalil, 2021).¹⁵

The effects of Bolsonaro government policy on indigenous peoples¹⁶ were, according to the Indigenous Missionary Council – CIMI¹⁷ (CIMI, 2020), included more cases of conflicts and violence, which almost doubled in the first year of the government (in 2019), compared to 2018. Territorial conflicts went from 11 to 35 cases, "death threats" went from 8 to 33; malicious bodily injury" almost tripled: from 5 to 13.

In addition, in 2020 there was more than a doubling of cases related to indigenous land invasions compared to those recorded in 2018 (134.9%). This is a doubling of the cases registered in 2018 (109). The cases were of illegal logging/deforestation; mining and mineral exploration; farming and ranching (cattle, soybeans, and corn); predatory fishing; illegal squatting/land-grabbing; predatory hunting; infrastructure ventures (highways, railroads, electric power infrastructure); the illegal exploitation of resources (sand,

¹⁵ Gudynas (2019) states that in progressive governments in Latin America, neoextractivism was justified as indispensable to obtain money for poverty reduction programs. This was presented as a goal for the majority, and therefore environmental and social impacts were to be tolerated because the impacts would affect only a few local communities, i.e., minorities. Thus, the goals of promoting environmental and ecological justice, as well as human and minority rights, were frequently denied.

¹⁶ Brazil's indigenous population is estimated at almost 818,000 individuals, of which 503,000 live in rural areas and 315,000 are urban. They are comprised of 305 indigenous peoples that speak 274 languages (APIB, 2022a). There are currently 383 indigenous lands in the legal Amazon, covering more than 1,160,000 km², representing 22% of this biome and 98% of the total area of indigenous lands in Brazil. These are territories established by federal jurisdiction to guarantee indigenous peoples' right to land, their social organization, and the maintenance of their cultural values. In addition, these lands are crucial for preserving tropical forests and the ecosystem services they provide (Rorato *et al.*, 2020).

¹⁷ CIMI is an organization linked to the CNBB (National Conference of Bishops of Brazil), connected to the Catholic Church. It was created in 1972, at the height of the Military Dictatorship, when the Brazilian State was adopting violent, authoritarian, and prejudiced colonial policies. These were related to the construction of large infrastructure projects (highways, hydroelectric dams, ports) throughout Brazil's territory, especially in the Amazon. These were followed by racist and prejudiced positions on the integration of indigenous peoples into society. CIMI's objective is to put itself at the service of the indigenous peoples' life projects, denouncing the structures of domination, violence and injustice, practicing intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, supporting the alliances of these peoples among themselves and with the popular sectors for the construction of a world for all, egalitarian, democratic, pluricultural and in harmony with nature (CIMI, 2022).

marble, gravel, palm heart); tourism ventures; and along drug trafficking routes (CIMI, 2020). All of these are linked to the climate of endorsement, support, and legitimization of violent and environmentally degrading practices that were part of the Bolsonaro government's political agenda (Araújo, 2020; Pelicice & Castello, 2021; Deutsch & Fletcher, 2022).

In 2020 there were 182 indigenous people murdered – 61% higher than in 2019, when 113 murders were registered. A total of 304 cases of violence committed against indigenous subjects were registered in 2020 (277 in 2019) (CIMI, 2021).

According to the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), deforestation linked to mining in the Amazon has increased by 62% in 2021 compared to 2018, when Jair Bolsonaro was elected to the presidency (APIB, 2022a¹⁸). These impacts are related to the Bill (PL) 191 drafted by the Bolsonaro government in February 2020 and still in process, which foresaw the opening of indigenous lands to mining (particularly for potash, following the worldwide shortage caused by the Ukraine war in 2022), agribusiness, oil and gas exploration, and the construction of hydroelectric dams (Ferrante & Fearnside, 2021, 2022). The Bill seeks the "formalization" of illegality and rights violations, with State recognition in granting rights and conditions to own, access, or trade lands and resources in a written legal or regulatory canon that is accepted by the state (Putzel *et al.*, 2015). In addition to combining violence and technology to reinforce the economic interests of agribusiness, and legal and illegal mining¹⁹ and logging sectors, the entire logistical chain linking these illegal activities and the global market has strengthened (Souza *et al.*, 2021).

In fact, the Bill goes against a responsible development policy, leaving Brazil without: i) incentives to farmers and nature conservation; ii) effective application of command and control measures; iii) of guaranteeing a path to legality and effective enforcement of laws; protecting and strengthening environmental agencies from political influence and budgetary bottlenecks; iv) prosecuting land-grabbers and illegal gold miners, instead of promoting new loopholes for their activities and regularization of appropriated public land. It would also allow v) rejecting bills that reduce, reclassify and declassify hard-won protected areas; vi) rejecting bills that grant more amnesty for previous deforestation (Schneider, Marques & Peres, 2021); vii) rejecting bills that promote a retrogression of environmental laws and policies; viii) enacting regulations that promote strict actions to curb mining activities and deforestation in indigenous territories caused by large firms.

The Bill also contradicts the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, of which Brazil is a signatory. According to this Declaration, indigenous peoples have the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, which allows them to agree to or reject a project that affects their livelihoods. Such rights are also enshrined in Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization, which was approved by the Brazilian Congress (Rorato *et al.*, 2020).

This Bill, which has become known as the "death package", had an impact on several Indigenous Lands in different ways. Between January and April 2020, 72% of all the illegal gold mining conducted in the Amazon occurred on indigenous lands. In the first four months of 2020, the deforested area on indigenous lands across the Brazilian Amazon resulting from illegal gold mining increased by 13.44% on the previous year, affecting 434.9 hectares (383.3 ha in 2019). Legitimizing mining would legalize further

¹⁸ The APIB is a national organization representing the indigenous movement in Brazil, created through grassroots efforts. It gathers regional indigenous organizations and was founded with the purpose of strengthening the union of indigenous peoples, the articulation among different regions and indigenous organizations in the country, in addition to mobilizing indigenous peoples and organizations against the threats and aggressions to indigenous rights (APIB, 2022a). The APIB was created by the Brazilian indigenous movement during the Terra Livre Encampment (ATL) of 2005. The ATL is a national mobilization, carried out every year, since 2004, to make visible the situation of indigenous rights and demand that the Brazilian State attend to their demands and claims (APIB, 2022b).

¹⁹ Until November 2021 there were 2,478 claims for mining exploration, of which 570 overlap with 261 different indigenous lands. These claims for mining rights are made on behalf of 570 mining companies, mining associations, and international groups that require an area of 10.1 million hectares (101,000 km²) – almost the size of England. Among the companies and multinationals are: VALE, Anglo American, Belo Sun, Potássio do Brasil, Mineração Taboca/Mamoré Mineração e Metalurgia (both part of the Minsur Group), Glencore, AngloGold Ashanti, and Rio Tinto (APIB, 2022b).

concessions. Efforts to fast track parts of the Bill dealing with mining were delayed as of May 2022, following large protests in Brasilia, but they have passed the lower house.²⁰

The Munduruku indigenous territory concentrates more than 442 active *garimpo* artisanal mines and at least 31 mining sites. Between January 2019 and May 2021, the area devastated by mining in the Munduruku Indigenous Land increased by 363% (against its 2018 extent) (Modelli, 2021). For Siqueira-Gay & Sánchez (2021), the rate of illegal deforestation for mining increased more than 90% from 2017 to 2020, reaching 101.7 km² annually in 2020 compared to 52.9 km² annually in 2017.

In Jacareacanga, a city in the Tapajós region in the state of Pará, the increase in the area degraded by gold mining was 269% more than in January 2019 (Modelli, 2021). As Siqueira-Gay & Sánchez (2021) point out, this expansion and consequent deforestation are driven by rising gold prices in international markets as well as the political support of the Bolsonaro government for mining on indigenous lands since he took office (Ferrante & Fearnside, 2020, 2021, 2022). But it is also necessary to understand that agribusiness accounts for the majority of violence and conflicts in the Amazon (CPT, 2020b). Since the international trade in agricultural commodities reaches US\$1.6 trillion/year (Zu Ermgassen *et al.*, 2020), its substantial profit motivation makes sustainability, ethical behavior, and non-violent negotiations over land unlikely. Rural violence is part of agribusiness logic, and the production of conflicts is a way to settle into new territories, expand profits, and maintain control and social legitimization (Rodrigues, 2021).

There has been an increase in rural violence, with persecution and constant death threats against defenders. Just in the Tapajós region (Southwest Pará), in 2019, there were 11 documented death threats, rising to 17 in 2020 (CPT, 2020, 2021a). This was the result of land grabbing and land speculation, including the purchase and sale of public lands, and settlement projects, with the State reinforcing a culture of impunity (Rapozo, 2021). In addition, there are hundreds of other people threatened, particularly members of traditional populations, in the city of Jacareacanga. Dozens are threatened due to the expansion of gold mining and conflicts between indigenous people and miners.

Another component of neoextractivist capitalist processes is a history of racist, colonial behavior, embedded in successive government actions but particularly since 2019 (Carvalho, Goyes & Weis, 2021). Bolsonaro's presidency has been imposed on indigenous peoples through symbolic and direct violence. Revealed in speeches and legislation, its discourse states: (i) that indigenous lands do not have indigenous people; (ii) that indigenous lands are rich in resources but have poor people; (iii) that indigenous people need to be integrated into society through the expansion of market logic; (iv) that indigenous peoples lack political and critical consciousness and need to be tutored. It is the denial of indigenous peoples' livelihoods, rationalities, beliefs and traditions that constitute symbolic and direct violence, reinforcing colonial practices of denying the alterity of such peoples, and the possibility of being and living differently (Carvalho, Goyes & Weis, 2021).

Land appropriation, resource exploitation, and social expropriation for capital accumulation require territorial control, and the silencing of critical voices (Huber *et al.*, 2017). This silencing was achieved through violence on "resource frontiers", "commodity frontiers," and "commodified resource frontiers" (Kröger & Nygren, 2020). These "frontiers" gradually become established, supported new agents in Amazonian communities, notably banks, funds and multinationals. They produce and intensify the (historical) mosaic of strong social tensions.

7. Conclusion

Throughout the article, we have identified the growing problem of threats to life against those who defend the natural environment, territory and communities in Pará, by quantifying, characterizing and reflecting on these environmental defenders (between 2014 and 2020). In addition, we identified the main activities and sectors identified with these threats and why they have increased in extent in recent years.

Between 2014 and 2020, the state of Pará had 261 leaders under death threats and only 61 of them included in the state program of human rights defenders. The majority of these threatened leaders are from traditional populations: Indigenous Peoples, *ribeirinhos*, coconut breakers, *quilombolas*, fishers, small-

²⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/bolsonaro-pushes-mining-brazils-indigenous-lands-citing-fertilizer-pinch-2022-03-09/> and <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/03/brazil-congress-fast-tracks-death-package-bill-to-mine-on-indigenous-lands/>

scale extractivists, and rubber tappers. These are individuals or groups of people who are involved in defending the community, the territory, their livelihoods, their traditions, ancestral forms of social reproduction, and the important Amazonian environment.

The vast majority of these leaders are concentrated in rural regions, which have historically witnessed a form of capitalist expansion and political and economic control over territories and regions in the Amazon. Unquestionably, violence is intertwined and driven by global capitalism (Pain & Cahill, 2021). The activities and sectors of mining, agribusiness and logging account for more than 70% of cases of conflicts in Pará, and the majority of death threats (CPT, 2020b).

Death threats to leaders are a form of violence that has been neglected and concealed from global scrutiny, but it conforms to a "standard violent disciplinary corporate technology", based on prolonged attacks as a way to enable the exploitation of natural resources and the expropriation of land. Communities, and their leaders, are intimidated. It is, therefore, used as a way to "symbolically kill" any "individual acts of resistance" or insurgent processes that may hinder or make it impossible to conduct lucrative economic activity. The threat of death is psychosocial coercion, as a way to build "a climate of fear", a feeling of being constantly under attack and close to losing one's life (Menton *et al.*, 2021).

Although violence is embedded in places, in minds, in bodies, in the city and across a region, the performance, activities and operations of hegemonic economic agents are global in scope. Their technical and economic networks articulate with political logics, for the maintenance or expansion of other areas rich in natural and infrastructural wealth. Such a framework is perfect for an authoritarian regime propagating violent rhetoric, as currently occurs in Brazil where attacks on environmental defenders go unpunished, and forms of dissent are being legally criminalized.

We are in an historical moment of corrosion, disruption, and questioning: questioning what rights mean, against a lack of cultural and religious tolerance, and attacks on life. However, the death threats to environmental defenders in Pará are accompanied by "translocal subaltern resistance" (Banerjee, Maher & Krämer, 2021), based on local ecologies and political ontologies, in which communities (collective territories) are continuing to resist the neo-extractive and developmentalist projects of the nation state.

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