

RELEASE

Pastoral Land Commission carries out national launch of the report Rural Conflicts in Brasil - 2023, with the highest rates of occurrences in the entire history of the publication

This April 22, the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) launches the 38th edition of the publication *Conflitos no Campo Brasil*, highlighting the balance of data on violence linked to agrarian issues in the countryside throughout 2023. In the first year of government of the third term of President Lula, the highest numbers were recorded since the beginning of the surveys, in 1985: in total, there were **2,203 conflicts**, compared to 2,050 in the previous year and 2,130 in 2020, which was until then the year in the first place in the number of conflicts.

The majority of registered conflicts are over **land** disputes (1,724, also the highest number recorded by the CPT), followed by incidents of **rural slave labor** (251) and conflicts over **water** (225). Among the states, the highest number was registered in Bahia, with 249 occurrences, followed by Pará (227), Maranhão (206), Rondônia (186) and Goiás (167). Among the regions, the North region recorded the most conflicts (810), followed by the Northeast region (665), MidWest (353), Southeast (207), and finally, the South region, with 168.

The conflicts involved 950,847 people, disputing 59,442,784 hectares of land throughout Brazil. The number of people involved is 2.8% higher compared to the 923,556 people involved in rural conflicts in 2022, but the area under dispute is 26.8% smaller, with 81,243,217 hectares being disputed in the same period of comparison.

Conflicts over Land – Of the 1,724 incidents recorded in this type of conflict, 1,588 refer to violence against occupation and possession and/or against the person. In the first type of violence, the increasing occurrences of **invasion** stand out, of which 359 occurrences were recorded in 2023, affecting 74,858 families, compared to 349 cases in 2022. **Expulsion** records also increased (37 occurrences and 2,163 families in 2023, compared to 23 occurrences and 596 families, in 2022), making the year second only to 2016, when the most families were expelled from the territories. The **threats of judicial eviction** have increased considerably (from 138 to 183) and **eviction by judicial order** also increased (from 17 to 50).

Violence perpetrated by gunmen was the second most frequent type of violence against occupation and possession recorded in 2023 with 264 occurrences, an increase of 45% in relation to the year of 2022, becoming the highest number of occurrences of this type of violence against families as a whole recorded by the CPT — a total of 36,200 families affected. Landless people were the main targets of these actions, with 130 incidents recorded, followed by squatters (49), indigenous people (47) and *quilombolas* (19). Other violent actions against the permanence of people in their territories were destruction of belongings (101), houses (73) and fields of crops (66).

Rural Slave Labor – In 2023, 251 cases of workers in situations of slavery in rural areas were registered, with 2,663 people rescued from this condition, these being the highest numbers recorded in the last 10 years. The main sites of rescues were in the states of Goiás (699), Minas Gerais (472), Rio Grande do Sul (323), and São Paulo, with 243 people rescued. The types of activities that had the most workers released in 2023 were sugar cane, with 618 workers; permanent crops, with 598; temporary crops, with 477; and other types of rural activities, with 273. The numbers could be even higher if there were a more structured policy to monitor and combat slave labor, especially in the North and Northeast regions.

Conflicts over Water – There was stability in the records (225, compared to 228 in the previous year), but the data is still high compared to the beginning of the last 10 years, led by the non-compliance with legal procedures by public authorities and private companies (78), followed by destruction and/or pollution (56), decreased and impeded access to water (48) and contamination by pesticides (26). Farmers, state governments, businesspeople, hydroelectric plants and mining companies continue to be the agents causing

these conflicts, which mainly victimize indigenous people (24.4%), fishermen (21.8%), riverside dwellers (13.3%), *quilombolas* (12.4 %) and settlers in public projects (8.4%).

Violence against Persons – There were 554 incidents that affected 1,467 people, including 31 murders, a decrease of almost 34% compared to the previous year, when 47 people were killed in the countryside. The highest proportion of victims came from the state of Rondônia (with 5 deaths), followed by Amazonas, Bahia, Maranhão and Roraima, with 4 victims each. The lives of 14 indigenous people and 9 landless people were taken, these being the populations that suffer most from this type of extreme violence, followed by squatters (4) and *quilombolas* (3). Over the last ten years, landless workers continue to be the largest category of victims (151), followed by indigenous people (90), out of a total of 420 people murdered in the struggle for land. Of the fatal victims of violence, 7 were women. The type of violence with the most victims was **pesticide contamination**, with 336 people victimized, followed by **death threats (218), intimidation (194), criminalization (160), detention (135), aggression (115), imprisonment (90) and false imprisonment (72)**, all having increased in relation to 2022.

Main Causes of Violence – The main agents causing violence in Axis Land were landowners, responsible for 31.2% of the total violence caused in this axis, followed by businesspeople (19.7%), Federal Government (11.2%), land grabbers (9%) and state governments, with 8.3%. In the case of the Federal Government, even with the small decrease in the total amount of violence caused, and with the greater openness of the government to dialogue with social movements, as well as the restructuring of ministries such as Agrarian Development, Human Rights and Justice, and the creation of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, these changes were not reflected in advances in the achievement of rights by peasant and traditional populations, such as agrarian reform and the demarcation of indigenous lands.

State governments have already acted with intense police repression against encampments and federal rural settlements, *quilombola* communities and indigenous lands, notably in Goiás, Bahia, Mato Grosso do Sul, Tocantins, Maranhão and Rondônia. The same can be said in relation to the federal and state legislative bodies, with the advancement of the ruralist caucus, promoting changes in legislation such as the Temporal Framework concerning indigenous territories, the Poison Package about pesticides, and in the states, land laws and authorizations for aerial spraying of pesticides.

Legal Amazon Region – In the region that comprises almost 60% of the Brazilian territory, there was a decrease in deforestation, with emphasis on the inspection actions of the Federal Police in the fight against illegal mining. But violence has grown in regions such as the triple border of the states of Amazonas, Acre and Rondônia (called Amacro or Abunã-Madeira Sustainable Development Zone). Of the 31 murders in the country, 8 were in this region, 5 of which were caused by land grabbers. The region promised as a “model” of development with a focus on socio-biodiversity, has become the epicenter of land grabbing for logging and cattle ranching, with high rates of deforestation, wildfires, and conflicts.

Resistance Actions – Also recorded in the Rural Conflicts report, actions of resistance also had a significant increase in 2023, including 119 occupations and repossessions, with 22 actions led by indigenous people, 3 *quilombola* repossessions and another 94 repossessions by other social identities. 17 encampments led by landless people and/or squatters were also registered, surpassing 2022, with only 5. These numbers began to grow again since 2021, but are still lower than the numbers from the ten-year series.

Report – Prepared annually for almost four decades by CPT, *Conflitos no Campo Brasil* is a source of research for universities, media outlets, governmental and non-governmental agencies. The publication is built mainly on the work of CPT pastoral agents in regional teams, that work in rural communities throughout the countryside, in addition to the investigation of complaints, documents and news, carried out by the team of documentalists at the Dom Tomás Balduino Documentation Center (Cedoc) throughout the year.

Service – National launch of the report Rural Conflicts in Brazil - 2023

Date: April 22, 2024 (Monday) from 9:00 (hour of Brasilia)

Location: Headquarters of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil – CNBB (Setor de Embaixadas Sul, Quadra 801 Conjunto B – Asa Sul, Brasilia)

To request raw data, contact the Communications Office: comunicacao@cptnacional.org.br