

**December 04, 2020**

Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans,  
Dear High Representative Borrell,

**Subject: Contradictory letter from Brazilian Vice-President maintain authoritarian risks to national democracy**

The undersigned Brazilian social organizations hereby express their appreciation for the joint positioning of the 68 MEPs, submitted last November 26, to the Brazilian government. The support of Members of the European Parliament is of fundamental importance to civil society in Brazil, which has been facing a dire scenario, especially over the last two years.

At this time, we also submit the outlook of a broad spectrum of social organizations, with activities throughout Brazil, which pursue wide-ranging agendas. This outlook contradicts the position taken by the vice-president of the Republic and chairman of the National Council for the Legal Amazon, Hamilton Mourão, in the open letter sent by him to the European Parliament on November 27, 2020.

The current federal administration, of which the vice-president is a central figure, was elected on the promise of “ending all types of activism in Brazil” and regrets “not being able to kill this cancer called NGO”. This administration published Provisional Measure No. 870, on their first day in office, back in 2018. Among other actions, this Provisional Measure allowed the federal government to “supervise, coordinate, monitor and follow up on the activities and actions of international entities and non-governmental organizations in the national territory”. Submitted in general terms, the provisional measure authorized government interference in social organizations and, fortunately, was rejected by the National Congress, thanks to the work of social entities and various leaders and political parties.

The same administration banned, through Decree 9,759/2019, hundreds of councils and other committees linked to the federal public administration, which were of fundamental importance to allow social participation and control. Many of the councils that escaped the ban, ended up excluding representatives of social organizations from their composition, which is what happened to the National Environment Fund, the National Drug Council and the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents.

High-ranking members of the federal government repeatedly make unfounded and irresponsible accusations against prestigious organizations and social leaders, such as when they accused those leaders of setting forests on fire, spilling oil on the Brazilian coast and violating national security, simply because they criticized the government before the international community. The Federal Attorney's Office has been used several times as a tool to harass environmentalists, journalists and scientists that are critical of the government. The government went as far as to send spies to the Climate Change Conference - COP 25 to scrutinize the actions of Brazilian environmentalists. There has been a huge number of attacks on civil society in the past two years, as can be seen from the clipping attached to this letter, which compiles many of them.

Within this context, we are alarmed by the enacting of any rule that allows the federal government to restrict the autonomy of Brazilian civil society. The letter of reply sent by the vice-president to this Parliament is contradictory. It claims that the government has no intention of restricting or controlling civil society organizations that are working "legally" in the Amazon, but states, without further explanation, that it intends to improve the "institutional framework" in order to promote a more "coordinated and organized interaction" between civil society and the Brazilian government. This, in other words, means to promote greater control. The relationship between social entities and the State is already regulated and supported by the Federal Constitution and the Civil Society Organizations Regulatory Framework.

The measure is based on alleged "insecurity, informality and lack of information that hinder work in the Amazon region", even after repeated attacks against federal research institutes such as the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) and the weakening of the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), which is the entity primarily responsible for the implementation of the national environmental policy.

Attacks on the freedom of organization, expression and the press, on social participation forums and on the mechanisms that ensure transparency and social control have ominous effects, not only by directly weakening Brazilian democracy, but also by affecting our ability to preserve the environment and guarantee the human rights of minority groups, seen as enemies of the government, as in the case of indigenous and traditional populations.

For these reasons, the organizations listed below hereby ask the European Parliament to help them in the international dissemination of information about the situation faced by the Brazilian democracy and to support the charges and actions submitted by Brazilian civil society entities to multilateral bodies concerning violations by the federal government against human rights and democratic freedom.

This letter is signed by:

1. ABI - Associação Brasileira de Imprensa
2. Ação Educativa
3. Aliança Nacional LGBTI+
4. All Out Brasil
5. APIB - Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil
6. Apremavi
7. Artigo 19
8. Ashoka
9. Associação da Parada do Orgulho GLBT de São Paulo
10. Atados
11. BV RIO
12. Centro de Trabalho Indigenista - CTI
13. Climainfo
14. Conectas Direitos Humanos
15. Delibera Brasil
16. Educafro Brasil
17. Engajamundo
18. FOAESP - Fórum das Ong Aids do Estado de São Paulo
19. Frente Favela Brasil
20. Fundação Avina
21. Fundação Grupo Esquel Brasil
22. Fundação Tide Setubal
23. GELEDÈS - Instituto da Mulher Negra
24. Gestos – Soropositividade, Comunicação e Gênero
25. Greenpeace Brasil
26. Grupo de Trabalho da Sociedade Civil Para Agenda 2030
27. IAB - Instituto dos Advogados Brasileiros
28. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
29. ICV - Instituto Centro de Vida
30. IDDD - Instituto de Defesa do Direito de Defesa
31. IDS - Instituto Democracia e Sustentabilidade
32. IDSB - Instituto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável Baiano
33. IEB - Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil
34. IEB - Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil
35. Imaflora
36. Instituto 5 Elementos - Educação para a Sustentabilidade
37. Instituto Alana

38. Instituto Cidade Democrática
39. Instituto Cidades Sustentáveis
40. Instituto de Referência Negra Peregum
41. Instituto Ethos - Empresas e Responsabilidade Social
42. Instituto Igarapé
43. Instituto Não Aceito Corrupção
44. Instituto Nossa Ilhéus
45. Instituto Physis - Cultura e Ambiente
46. ISA - Instituto Socioambiental
47. Instituto Update
48. Instituto Vladimir Herzog
49. IPÊ - Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas
50. Mater Natura - Instituto de Estudos Ambientais
51. Movimento Mapa Educação
52. MTST - Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto
53. Observatório do Clima
54. Ocupa Política
55. Open Knowledge Brasil
56. Oxfam Brasil
57. Projeto Hospitais Saudáveis - PHS
58. Projeto Saúde e Alegria
59. Rede Brasileira de Conselhos - RBdC
60. Rede Conhecimento Social
61. Rede Justiça Criminal
62. SPVS - Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental
63. TETO Brasil
64. Transparência Brasil
65. UNE - União Nacional dos Estudantes
66. Uneafro Brasil
67. WWF - Brasil
68. 342 Amazônia
69. 342 Artes
70. 350.org

## **ATTACKS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS**

November 25, 2020 - Minister of the Environment uses the Federal Attorney's Office to persecute journalists, scientist and environmentalist who have criticized him

<https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/rubens-valente/2020/11/24/salles-interpelacao-judicial-agu-meio-ambiente.htm>

November 24, 2020 - Federal government uses public funds to monitor networks of journalists and parliamentarians

<https://epoca.globo.com/guilherme-amado/planalto-monitora-redes-sociais-de-parlamentares-jornalistas-com-dinheiro-publico-24755889>

November 10, 2020 - Government plans to control 100% of NGOs in the Amazon

<https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral.governo-bolsonaro-planeja-norma-para-controlar-acao-de-ongs-na-amazonia.70003506777>

October 16, 2020 - Minister of the Institutional Security Office admits use of Brazilian Intelligence Agency to spy on NGOs at the Madrid Climate Conference

[https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral.helena-admite-que-abin-monitorou-maus-brasileiros-na-conferencia-do-clima-da-onu.70003478088?utm\\_source=estadao:whatsapp&utm\\_medium=link](https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral.helena-admite-que-abin-monitorou-maus-brasileiros-na-conferencia-do-clima-da-onu.70003478088?utm_source=estadao:whatsapp&utm_medium=link)

September 18 - Minister of the Institutional Security Office accuses the Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil and its leader Sônia Guajajara of crimes against the country for criticizing the government

<https://veja.abril.com.br/blog/matheus-leitao/comunidade-indigena-reage-apos-ataques-de-geral-helena-contra-apib/>

September 4, 2020 - President says he 'can't kill this cancer called NGO'

<https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/reuters/2020/09/03/nao-consigo-matar-cancer-chamado-ongs-que-atuam-na-amazonia-diz-bolsonaro.htm>

August 23, 2020 - President threatens to attack reporter when questioned about possible corruption case

<https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2020/08/23/bolsonaro-diz-a-reporter-vontade-que-tenho-e-encher-sua-boca-de-porrada.htm>

August 21, 2020 - Federal Police summoned anti-government columnist to testify under the National Security Law

<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2020/08/pf-intima-colunista-da-folha-a-depor-sobre-texto-que-tratou-de-bolsonaro-e-covid.shtml>

August 18, 2020 – Federal Police investigates Sleeping Giants, an organization that denounces fake news from Bolsonaro supporters

<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/colunas/monicabergamo/2020/08/pf-abriu-investigacao-contra-sleeping-giants-que-denuncia-fake-news-de-apoiadores-de-bolsonaro.shtml>

August 13, 2020 - Organizations are removed from participatory council after signing impeachment request

<https://www.almapreta.com/editorias/realidade/apos-pedido-de-impeachment-governo-bolsonaro-retira-organizacoes-negras-de-conselho-de-igualdade-racial>

July 24, 2020 - Secret government action targets anti-fascist teachers and police officers  
<https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/rubens-valente/2020/07/24/ministerio-justica-governo-bolsonaro-antifascistas.htm>

July 14, 2020 - After reporting high rates of deforestation in the Amazon, INPE scientist is fired

[https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral.governo-exonera-responsavel-pelo-monitoramento-da-amazonia-no-inpe-apos-alta-de-desmatamento.70003362539?utm\\_source=meio&utm\\_medium=email](https://sustentabilidade.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral.governo-exonera-responsavel-pelo-monitoramento-da-amazonia-no-inpe-apos-alta-de-desmatamento.70003362539?utm_source=meio&utm_medium=email)

June 15, 2020 - Government uses National Security Law to investigate political cartoon  
<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2020/06/governo-usa-lei-de-seguranca-nacional-para-investigar-jornalista-que-publicou-charge-de-bolsonaro.shtml>

June 4, 2020 - Bolsonaro says anti-government protesters are terrorists  
<https://www.opovo.com.br/noticias/politica/2020/06/04/bolsonaro-diz-que-manifestantes-contrarios-ao-governo-sao-terroristas.html>

May 26, 2020 - Minister of the Environment sees coronavirus as an opportunity to end environmental regulations

<https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2020/05/23/salles-reforca-fala-em-reuniao-ministerial-sobre-passar-a-boiada.htm>

May 24, 2020 - Due to safety concerns, press vehicles stop covering the entryway to the Planalto Palace

<https://www.cartacapital.com.br/sociedade/apos-violencia-de-bolsonaristas-jornalistas-deixam-de-fazer-plantao-no-alvorada>

May 22, 2020 - Bolsonaro says he has a "private" intelligence system

<https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2020/05/22/em-reuniao-bolsonaro-diz-que-tem-sistema-particular-de-informacoes-que-funciona-e-que-o-sistema-oficial-desinforma.ghtml%C2%A0>

May 3rd, 2020 - Bolsonaro returns to support antidemocratic acts

<https://g1.globo.com/fantastico/noticia/2020/05/03/bolsonaro-volta-a-apoiar-ato-antidemocratico-contra-o-stf-e-o-congresso-em-brasilia.ghtml>

April 19, 2020 - Bolsonaro interrupts the quarantine and speaks at a demonstration asking for AI-5

<https://veja.abril.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-fura-quarentena-e-participa-de-manifestacao-no-qg-do-exercito/>

April 28, 2020 - Bolsonaro names family friend for Federal Police Officer

<https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2020/04/28/novo-diretor-geral-da-pf-alexandre-ramagem-esta-na-corporacao-desde-2005-e-e-amigo-da-familia-bolsonaro-veja-perfil.ghtml>

April 14, 2020 - IBAMA director is exonerated after operation against illegal mining

[https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/rubens-valente/2020/04/14/ibama-conoravirus-crise.htm?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social-media&utm\\_content=geral&utm\\_campaign=noticias](https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/rubens-valente/2020/04/14/ibama-conoravirus-crise.htm?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social-media&utm_content=geral&utm_campaign=noticias)

March 30, 2020 - Defense Ministry releases note to exalt the 1964 coup

<https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,ministro-da-defesa-diz-que-golpe-de-64-e-marco-para-a-democracia,70003254140>

March 04, 2020 - IBAMA official appointed by Environment Minister clears export of native wood

[https://theintercept.com/2020/03/04/ibama-salles-exportacao-madeira-nativa/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=a\\_cara\\_de\\_pau\\_de\\_eduardo\\_bim\\_e\\_a\\_primavera\\_da\\_lata\\_de\\_ricardo\\_salles\\_na\\_newsletter&utm\\_term=2020-11-27](https://theintercept.com/2020/03/04/ibama-salles-exportacao-madeira-nativa/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=a_cara_de_pau_de_eduardo_bim_e_a_primavera_da_lata_de_ricardo_salles_na_newsletter&utm_term=2020-11-27)

February 26, 2020 - Bolsonaro shares video calling for act against congress

<https://www.terra.com.br/noticias/brasil/bolsonaro-compartilha-video-que-convoca-ato-contra-congresso.a9ca484dc724332732158a232a8fd4a0aort0spa.html>

December 11, 2019 - Provisional Measure 910 issued by the government provides for the release of land grabbing

<https://www.oeco.org.br/reportagens/mp-da-regularizacao-fundiaria-anistia-grilagem-de-terras-publicas-ate-2018/>

November 28, 2019 - Bolsonaro and Salles anticipate justice, condemn brigadiers and accuse NGOs of setting fire to the Amazon

<https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-e-salles-se-antecipam-a-justica-e-condenam-brigadistas/>

September 25, 2019 - At the U.N., Jair Bolsonaro Presents a Surreal Defense of His Amazon Policies

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/at-the-united-nations-jair-bolsonaro-presents-a-surreal-defense-of-his-amazon-policies>

August 21, 2019 - Bolsonaro accuses NGOs of planning the Amazon fires

<https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/08/21/bolsonaro-diz-que-ongs-podem-estar-por-tras-de-queimadas-na-amazonia-para-chamar-atencao-contra-o-governo.ghtml>

August 16, 2019 - Bolsonaro says he will not demarcate any indigenous land while he is president

<https://valor.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/08/16/nao-vou-demarcar-terra-indigena- enquanto-for-presidente-diz-bolsonaro.ghtml>

August 06, 2019 - President edits Provisional Measure to weaken newspaper

revenue <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2019/08/bolsonaro-assina-mp-que-acaba-com-publicacao-de-balanco-de-empresa-em-jornais.shtml>

August 1, 2019 - Bolsonaro e Salles discredit fire monitoring system and dismiss director of INPE

<https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/ao-lado-de-bolsonaro-ministro-anuncia-novo-modo-para-acompanhar-desmatamento-23848054>

02 de julho de 2019 - Brazilian VP's son is promoted twice at the national bank

<https://veja.abril.com.br/politica/filho-de-mourao-muda-de-cargo-pela-2a-vez-em-6-meses-no-banco-do-brasil/>

June 04, 2019 - Decree 9.579 extinguishes participatory councils

[https://www.jota.info/paywall?redirect\\_to=//www.jota.info/opiniao-e-analise/artigos/a-extincao-de-conselhos-e-foruns-participativos-pelo-decreto-no-9-759-de-11-04-19-04062019](https://www.jota.info/paywall?redirect_to=//www.jota.info/opiniao-e-analise/artigos/a-extincao-de-conselhos-e-foruns-participativos-pelo-decreto-no-9-759-de-11-04-19-04062019)

May 28, 2019 - Bolsonaro says his pen has more power than that of the chamber leader

[https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/politica/2019/05/28/interna\\_politica.758288/bolsonaro-alfineta-maia.shtml](https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/politica/2019/05/28/interna_politica.758288/bolsonaro-alfineta-maia.shtml)

January 24, 2019 - Decree signed by Hamilton Mourão weakens the access to information law

[https://artigo19.org/blog/2019/01/24/decreto-que-amplia-cargos-que-podem-atribuir-sigilo-ult-rasessecreto-a-informacao-publica-e-preocupante-e-contraria-a-lai/?fbclid=IwAR37tR2I2F-JnxGP0ODqkLI-rM01bNjyikoX6TwGvP\\_O6gABPDTL7Cv8qR8%C2%A0](https://artigo19.org/blog/2019/01/24/decreto-que-amplia-cargos-que-podem-atribuir-sigilo-ult-rasessecreto-a-informacao-publica-e-preocupante-e-contraria-a-lai/?fbclid=IwAR37tR2I2F-JnxGP0ODqkLI-rM01bNjyikoX6TwGvP_O6gABPDTL7Cv8qR8%C2%A0)

January 03, 2019 - MP 870 - government wants to supervise, coordinate, monitor and track the activities and NGO actions

<https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-46742940>