

Environmental disasters and food security

Report submitted by Black Women's March of São Paulo to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in 2022.

The Black Women March of São Paulo is a civil society organization composed of black women, independent and collective, diverse and plural, arising from the historic milestone of 2015 when 50.000 black women marched in Brasília to deliver the political project of black women in Brazil to the presidency of the Republic. The March acts in São Paulo against racism and against gender and class violence, taking the Bem Viver (well being) as a life project.

We demand, according to our manifest of July 2022, “Food without pesticides on the plate and Food security”, in addition to “Cheaper electricity bills”. It's what we want. And if we want, we can!

This report is a denunciation of the environmental atrocities that are taking place in Brazilian territories, which contributes to the global climate crisis and directly affects the right to food safety of black, quilombola people, indigenous people and traditional people who live in these places, as well as family farming, that generates income for local producers.

Introduction

1. In October 2021, the UN Human Rights Council recognized, for the first time, that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right. In July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution declaring that all people on the planet have the right to a clean and healthy environment.
2. Studies claim that climate change has negative effects on Food and Nutritional Security. The assurance that everyone should have access to basic quality food and in sufficient quantity, without compromising other essential needs, could be influenced by multiple determinants: poverty, level of education, unemployment, rising food prices, poor access to food, inequality of land and labor rights, and climate and environment change.
3. The negative effects of climate change on Food and Nutritional Security have been studied in developing countries, which has bringing evidence to show how these negative effects contribute to the aggravation of different forms of innutrition: malnutrition, nutritional deficiencies and overweight/obesity.
4. In 2022, the Second National Survey on Food Insecurity in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil pointed out that 33.1 million people are not guaranteed what to eat — which represents 14 million new Brazilians in a situation of hunger. According to the study, more than half (58.7%) of the Brazilian population lives with food insecurity in some degree: mild, moderate or severe.

5. The document highlights the impact of climate change, the unsustainable management and the use of natural resources, air, land and water pollution, the poor management of chemicals and waste disposal and the consequent loss of biodiversity that interfere with the benefit of this right.

6. Another report on this topic is called "The impact of disasters and crises on agriculture and food security: 2021", carried out in Rome by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The report says that "Agriculture sustains the livelihoods of more than 2.5 billion people – most of them in low-income developing countries – and remains a key driver of development. At no other time in history has agriculture faced so many familiar and unfamiliar risks, interacting in a hyper-connected world and rapidly changing landscape. And agriculture continues to absorb a disproportionate share of disaster damage and loss. Its increasing frequency and intensity, in conjunction with the systemic nature of the risk, are destroying people's lives, devastating livelihoods and endangering our entire food system."

7. The report also identifies drought as the single biggest culprit for the loss of agricultural production, followed by floods, storms, pests and diseases, and forest fires. More than 34% of the loss of agricultural and livestock production in underdeveloped countries (LDCs) and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is attributed to drought, which has cost the sector US\$37 billion in total. Drought affects agriculture almost exclusively. The sector sustains 82% of all drought impact, compared to 18% for all other sectors. In other words, it can destroy crops and cause food prices to skyrocket.

8. It should be noted at this point that it is the first time that an edition of the FAO report converts the economic losses suffered in agricultural production into caloric and nutritional equivalents. It is estimated that the loss of agricultural and livestock production in the LDCs and LMICs between 2008 and 2018 was equivalent to a loss of 6.9 trillion kilocalories per year. This is equivalent to the annual calorie intake of seven million adults.

9. In this sense, we see the institutionalization of environmental racism that reached less favored territories. As an example we have Latin America and the Caribbean, whose impacts of disasters during the same period mentioned above, convert into a loss of 975 calories per capita per day, representing 40% of the recommended daily intake, followed by Africa (559 calories) and Asia (283 calories).

10. According to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action carried out in 2001, there is great concern that, despite the efforts of the international community, the main objectives of the three Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination were not achieved and that a countless number of human beings continue to this day to fall victim to various forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

11. Currently, even after COP 27, 2022, Brazilian territories are under pressure to install thermoelectric plants. Vale do Paraíba, in the city of Caçapava/SP, and Baía de Sepetiba, in RJ, have already taken this issue to the federal level.

12. A thermoelectric plant needs cooling. If the company chooses to use water, it will use about 100m³ per hour from underground reservoirs. Part of this water will be evaporated, released into the atmosphere along with polluting gases, and part will be released into the Paraíba basin at high temperature, which directly impacts the aquatic fauna and flora of the

region. In addition to using groundwater, it returns it to the water course with about 2 degrees 'higher (which immediately affects the aquatic fauna and flora) and about 30% of the volume is released into the atmosphere.

13. The project is in its initial phase, but we already know that it is in progress, because an approval was given for a soil study of an area of 15 hectares, land that was leased by a company in the energy sector. The plant planned for Caçapava would be one of the largest in Latin America, a true setback in the fight against the climate crisis we are experiencing.

14. Recently, on 01/13/2022, occurred an explosion at the thermoelectric power plant in the Jardim Floresta neighborhood, west of Boa Vista (Roraima, Brazil), caused by an overheated container. Nearby of the plant, it was possible to see a lot of black smoke and the smell of burnt oil.

15. According to data from the Electric Energy Auction Bulletin, from the Institute of Energy and the Environment (IEMA in portuguese), in addition to increasing the price of consumers' energy bills, the new plants also represent an increase of more than 39% in greenhouse gas emissions. 16. Therefore, in addition to the imminent risk of polluting gas emissions that affect the entire population's health in the territory, the operation of plants at high temperatures directly influences the local biodiversity, bringing the risk of contamination of water and soil, which impairs the local food production

17. Another matter to be brought to the attention of the High Commission is the dredging process that is taking place on the coasts and riverside regions of the Brazilian territory.

18. This process consists of removing part of the bottom of the sea, lakes, dams, riverbeds and channels by using equipment called dredgers, in order to make them deeper.

19. Consist of environmental impacts by dredging work, with direct or indirect effect on the environment (OECD, 1993; LEAL NETO, 2000; PORTO & TEIXEIRA, 2002; TORRES, 2000):

- alteration of the hydraulic and sedimentological conditions of the flow, with possible alteration of the patterns of circulation and water mixing, salinity and turbidity;
- change in conditions at the place where the dredged material is dumped
- pollution by toxic substances existing in the dredging material, its suspension and movement during the activity, with alteration of the water quality (turbidity); and
- direct impacts on aquatic fauna and flora habitats, associated with marine sediment and inland waters.

20. Environmental conflicts due to port dredging are related to the level of contamination of the dredged sediments and the location selected for dumping, which can cause damage to aquatic biota, with repercussions on the quality of life of regional actors.

21. In 2011, an article in the newspaper O Globo (communication vehicle) highlighted that fishermen from Praia de Itaipu, in Niterói/RJ/Br, had noticed that there was an increase in debris on the coast of the city, between 2009 and 2011: the which reduced by about 80% the

amount of fish in the region; generating, at the time, a loss of R\$ 700 per day. According to the inhabitants of the territory: “On days of bad weather, the sea is agitated and spreads those thousands of tons of discarded garbage, close to the coast of the city of Niterói”.

22. A positive example of disposal of dredged material is the case of the dredging of the Fundão Canal, in 2010. Part of the material was used to create a hydraulic landfill. An area of mangroves covering 130,000 square meters was created on Ilha do Fundão. In addition to generating a positive environmental impact, the alternative saved on transporting the sediment to some distant stretch of the coast; which also avoided contamination of the place that would receive the sediment.

23. For High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet: “all people, everywhere, have the right to eat, breathe and drink without poisoning their bodies and, in doing so, to be able to live harmoniously with the natural world, without increasing threats of ecosystem collapse and climate catastrophe”.

24. Unlike the term “food security”, linked to the availability and access to food, food sovereignty is understood as a right and essential asset of peoples and necessarily implies territorial sovereignty and water sovereignty. And it is these two axes that are directly confronted with large mining projects.

25. With the deepening of mineral exploration in Brazil in the last 15 years, peasants in many regions began to deal intensely with the loss of land to mining companies. A mining enterprise, regardless of the scale or mineral extracted, puts the waters of a given region in a vulnerable situation. When it comes to the large industrial mines of iron and bauxite, water consumption is even greater, in addition to the constant pattern of contamination of watercourses associated with the installation of mining projects.

26. An example is the region of Caetité (BA) where there is the only active uranium mine in the country, the state-owned Indústrias Nucleares do Brasil (INB) which admitted in its own reports that there are water wells in the neighboring municipality of Lagoa Real with a concentration of uranium above the level allowed by the World Health Organization. An important fact about this issue is that the region where the radioactive mineral is being explored is semi-arid, with long periods of drought. Water, which is scarce, is essential for the lives of people living in rural areas.

27. Therefore, it is concluded that the defense of the territory and the environment is a question of survival as it has a direct impact on plantations, thus undermining the right to food.

Recommendations:

Considering the above, and wishing to contribute to the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Marcha das Mulheres Negras de São Paulo (MMNSP) presents below the following suggested recommendations to the States as a whole and, in particular to Brazil :

- Greater investment in wind farms and solar plants, as the costs are lower than thermoelectric plants that waste more water from their reservoirs and degrade the

environment, as well as policies that meet socio-environmental justice criteria, anchored in technical information and designed with social participation .

- The publicity and public transparency necessary for the presentation of the previous EIA-RIMA for economic activities that cause environmental damage or potential risks to the environment envisaged in Brazilian environmental legislation, through Federal Law no. 6938/1984.
- An adequate final destination for the dredged mud and sediments – the so-called “throw out”, as well as the disposal of this dredging material at points where sea currents do not bring back the finer sediment to the coast that impacts islands and rock formations, permanently submerged since in these areas there are several marine species that reproduce
- A mining model that is more respectful of people and the environment and that includes impacted communities and civil society in decision-making processes through deliberative councils.
- Take appropriate corrective measures to clean, reuse and rehabilitate contaminated sites and, where necessary, voluntarily relocate those affected, after consultation, in accordance with the Durban Action Plan, 2001.
- Make companies responsible for their actions in faster ways to remedy violations and punish offenders, as well as combat attempts to weaken important legislation, such as the black list, in addition to pressing for public funding to expand environmental inspections.
- Encourage community farming by social movements and solidarity kitchens that work with the right to food for people in vulnerable situations.

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