

# Report “Sementes” (seeds) 2022

## Situation of human rights advocates in Brazilian electoral process 2022



proponentes



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# Relatório “Sementes” (seeds) 2022

## Situation of human rights advocates in Brazilian electoral process 2022

### Project Seeds of Protection (“Sementes de Proteção”) for Human Rights Advocates

This document was prepared with the financial participation of the European Union.

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Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não Governamentais (Abong)

Sociedade Maranhense de Direitos Humanos (SMDH/MNDH)

We World GVC Onlus

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Articulação para o Monitoramento dos Direitos Humanos (AMDH)

Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transexuais e Intersexos (ABGLT)

Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT)

Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI)

Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos (MNDH)

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# Presentation



**The project Seeds of Protection for Human Rights Defenders ([sementesdeprotecao.org.br](http://sementesdeprotecao.org.br)) is a joint initiative of the Maranhense Society for Human Rights (SMDH), the National Human Rights Movement (MNDH), the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (Abong) and We World GVC Onlus, with financial support from the European Union, for the development of actions to strengthen civil society organizations that work with human rights in Brazil.**

**The Project Seeds of Protection** also counts with the participation, as associates, of the **Pastoral Land Commission (CPT)**, the **Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals and Intersexes (ABGLT)**, the **Articulation for the Monitoring of Human Rights (AMDH)** and the **Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI)**.

The **overall objective** of the project is to contribute to the support of human rights advocates and civil society organizations that work on issues associated with human rights violations and attacks against fundamental freedoms in Brazil. The **specific objective** is to strengthen the advocacy, promotion and protection capacities of activists and fighters who are human rights advocates from social movements and civil society organizations in 21 Brazilian states in order to sow the seeds of popular protection.

**The final beneficiaries of the project are:** activists, people's fighters, community leaders, leaders of civil society organisations that are engaged in the social struggle in Brazil and are recognised as advocates of human rights.

**They are peasants** (landless people, rural workers, family farmers, squatters); traditional peoples and communities (indigenous people, quilombolas, riverside inhabitants, artisanal fishermen, rubber tappers, extractivists); LGBTQIA+ people; women; environmentalists; leaders of the anti-racist struggle, the homeless; affected by large enterprises (mining, dams); religious people of African origin; agents of the struggle against torture and imprisonment; advocates of the youth of the urban periphery; people living on the streets and collectors of materials; leaders of urban peripheries etc.

**The report on the second year of development of the Project Seeds of Protection brings narratives from 39 human rights advocates who work in various fields of struggles for rights.** This year, based on the interviews conducted, **the report sought to address three main issues:** the Brazilian electoral process in 2022, based on the violence perceived and experienced by HRAs, as well as the strategies adopted by organizations to address the context; an assessment of democracy and human rights in Brazil and the challenges to strengthening them; and an evaluation of the challenges to strengthening the organizations and movements in which HRAs operate.

**It is important to highlight that the preparation of the report took place in a period of great turbulence in the country.** The collection of testimonials took place between the end of the second half of 2022 and January 2023, a period in which we experienced great political instability due to the risk of a possible renewal of the term of the then president, Jair Bolsonaro, since the election would be decided in a second round. **As a result, there was a greater demand for the engagement of organised civil society—organisations and social movements—in confronting barbarism and building a campaign that defended a democratic project for the country.**





After this initial turbulence and having the good fortune to see the project that most closely matches the interests and needs of the majority of the population win the elections, **there was no rest**. After a week of a historic inauguration ceremony, in which the presidential sash was handed over to President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva by a diversity of representations from organised civil society, which also demonstrated the diversity of the Brazilian people and had the symbolism of the people “climbing the ramp of power”, terrorist acts began, committed by extreme right-wing groups, supporters of the former president, unhappy with the defeat at the ballot box.

**These facts—both the beautiful and the tragic—appear in the narratives of the advocates heard for the construction of the report.** Before the confirmation of Lula’s victory, the narratives are filled with tension and the fear that the genocidal project would be renewed and, consequently, the fear that the situation of democracy and human rights would become even more fragile in the country. **After the victory, the speeches already bring a great sign of hope, guided by the opening to dialogue and the reconstruction of a country that was frayed not only during the electoral process, but since the coup suffered by the president Dilma Rousseff in 2016.**

In the text that follows, we seek to present some of the main information and opinions collected from the questions asked to the advocates, **whose report with the full text of the interviews, in Portuguese, can be accessed at the following link:** <http://bit.ly/relatorioementes2022>.



# Can you make a **brief presentation telling us about your main action in the struggle** for human rights?

In this first moment, the 39 advocates interviewed were able to make a brief presentation of their personal journeys with civil society movements and organisations. They are:

1. Adriana Ramos  
**(Instituto Socioambiental - ISA)**
2. Alair Luís dos Santos  
**(Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores Rurais na Agricultura Familiar - Contag)**
3. André Freitas  
**(Greenpeace Brasil)**
4. Antônio Eduardo Cerqueira de Oliveira  
**(Conselho Indigenista Missionário - CIMI)**
5. Benedito Roberto Barbosa (Dito)  
**(Central de Movimentos Populares - CMP)**
6. Bruna Benevides  
**(Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais - Antra)**
7. Cacique Babau (Rosivaldo Ferreira da Silva)  
**(Aldeia Tupinambá Serra do Padeiro)**
8. Carlos Nicodemos  
**(MNDH e Organização Projeto Legal - OPL)**
9. Carmen Silva  
**(SOS Corpo - Instituto Feminista para a Democracia)**
10. Cláudia Sala de Pinho  
**(Rede de Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais do Brasil)**
11. Darcy Costa  
**(Movimento Nacional da População em Situação de Rua - MNPR)**
12. Débora Rodrigues  
**(Associação Vida Brasil e Abong)**
13. Denise Dora  
**(Artigo 19)**
14. Diva Santa  
**(Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais - GTNM)**
15. Fagner Jandrey  
**(Movimento Nacional de Catadoras e Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis - MNCR)**
16. Fernando Pigatto  
**(Fórum em Defesa do Direito Humano à Saúde)**
17. Getúlio Vargas Junior  
**(Confederação Nacional das Associações de Moradores - Conam)**
18. Giuliano Galli  
**(Instituto Vladimir Herzog - Rede Nacional de Proteção de Jornalistas e Comunicadores)**
19. Givânia Silva  
**(Coordenação Nacional de Articulação de Quilombos - Conaq)**
20. Gustavo Coutinho  
**(Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transexuais e Intersexos - ABGLT)**
21. Heliana Hemetério  
**(Rede Candaces de Lésbicas e Bissexuais Negras, Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras)**
22. Iêda Leal  
**(Movimento Negro Unificado - MNU)**
23. Irene Maria dos Santos  
**(Instituto Brasil Central - Ibrace)**
24. João Marcos R. Dutra  
**(Movimentos dos Atingidos por Barragens - MAB)**
25. Júlio Barbosa  
**(Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas - antigo Conselho Nacional dos Seringueiros)**





26. Larice Durval Ribeiro  
**(Levante Popular da Juventude)**

27. Leonardo Pinho  
**(Central de Cooperativas e Empreendimentos Solidários, Unisol Brasil, Associação Brasileira de Saúde Mental - Abrasme)**

28. Lucia Secoti  
**(Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Pessoa Idosa - CNDI)**

29. Makota Celinha Gonçalves  
**(Centro Nacional de Africanidade e Resistência Afro Brasileira - Cenarab)**

30. Marina Dermmam  
**(Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST)**

31. Mônica Alkmim  
**(Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos - MNDH)**

32. Nilma Bentes  
**(Centro de Estudos e Defesa do Negro do Pará - Cedenpa)**

33. Paola Falceta  
**(Associação de Vítimas e Familiares de Vítimas da Covid-19 - Avico)**

34. Irmã Petra Pfaller  
**(Pastoral Carcerária)**

35. Ronilson Costa  
**(Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT)**

36. Roseane Dias  
**(Sociedade Maranhense de Direitos Humanos - SMDH)**

37. Tânia Dornellas  
**(Campanha Nacional pelo Direito à Educação - CNDE)**

38. Valdênia Aparecida Paulino Lanfranchi  
**(Justiça nos Trilhos)**

39. Virgínia Berriel  
**(Central Única dos Trabalhadores - CUT)**



# How do you assess the 2022 electoral process: **what are the difficulties and violations perceived in this period**, especially for human rights advocates?

The last elections meant a real confrontation for the human rights field, and for many leaders this electoral process was the corollary of a political process that began six years ago, whose culmination was the coup of 2016 that ousted former President Dilma Rousseff. **During this period there has been an increase in all types of violence against human rights advocates**, in addition to the dismantling of achievements in the areas of health, education, science and technology, culture and working class rights.

During the elections, advocates and militants of the countryside and cities were the target, in the social networks and in the streets, of various actions of embarrassment, persecution, threats and attacks of various kinds. **In traditional communities conflicts intensified and violence was even more intense, with the execution of several attacks by sectors linked to agribusiness targeting indigenous peoples, quilombolas, riverside communities, fishermen and other groups.** This was a process also marked by fear. The extreme right is very aggressive, and the leaders interviewed said that **“one of the biggest challenges in these four years was living” (Virginia Berriel, CUT).**

And even after the elections, it is still scary to know that just under half the country still believes in a political project of extermination of vulnerable groups. **In addition to this movement, there is a culture of disbelief in politics that, because of the concern arising from fear of the consequences of a violent conflict,** makes us try to avoid healthy political debates, a behaviour that goes against the exercise of citizenship and democracy.

Still on the 2022 elections, in addition to physical attacks, in the ideological field we experienced equally violent disputes. Not only on the eve of the vote, but throughout the Bolsonaro administration, people and organisations of human rights were defamed, figuring as the main targets of lies, fake news and disinformation campaigns, discrediting and often criminalising their work.

Moreover, never before has the public machine been so used in a desperate attempt to re-elect the incumbent government: from the execution of truly welfarist policies to the use of the police force to prevent votes for other candidates, to the use of the state apparatus to call into question the Brazilian electoral system, Bolsonaro has done everything he could to avoid leaving the presidency.

Much of the violence experienced by human rights advocates seems to stem from the “endorsement” given by former President Jair Bolsonaro to the population to **disrespect, discriminate and dehumanise specific social groups, mainly black people, indigenous people, quilombolas, women, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities and people of African matrix religions.** The groups supporting the then president felt they had permission to go against, to delegitimise and even to criminalise, above all, the people who defend all these groups. **Currently, there is a fear regarding the behaviour of supporters after the defeat of the Bolsonaro government. In this sense, human rights advocates believe that the coming years will still be full of struggle and confrontation in the defence of human rights.**

On the other hand, the human rights field had an important victory. We elected, not only at the federal level, but also in several states, progressive governments aligned with human rights agendas. We have established alliances and built strategies with other sectors and groups to ensure the continuity of our work, and we have been able to show that only collective and popular organisation is capable of defeating authoritarian ideals that violate human rights.

It was an election of much sacrifice, of much fear, but it was an election of much courage, eye to eye and grassroots work. However, as the interviewed leaders warn, it is equally important not to forget that, after an exhaustive campaign that defeated Bolsonaro in the polls, **Bolsonarism is still active as a resented social force among the people and as an institutional force in the National Congress and in several legislative houses throughout Brazil.**

**As a human rights advocate, for the first time I was worried for my life because Bolsonaro gave a green light that put us in that place of “killable”–women, black people and LGBTs.**

**(Heliana Hemetério  
- Rede Candaces  
and Articulação  
de Mulheres Negras  
Brasileiras)**



# What **strategies and alternatives** has your **organisation implemented** to face this scenario?

To confront the scenario described in the previous question by human rights advocates, where violence and the danger of institutionalised fascism prevailed, various strategies were adopted by organisations and movements.

**Some organizations focused on the issue of information and digital rights**, working with the preparation of materials to present answers to the fake news that were so widespread among the population. **Many organisations also focused their work with the grassroots, developing mobilisation actions, public debates and training for a critical perspective of the situation among the population**, as well as working with community radios and other local media.

**Another important strategy reported by most of those interviewed was networking.** The articulations and partnerships in different projects, actions and causes were fundamental to promote collective and popular protection, actions and mobilizations among the population, as well as to face the process of criminalization of the organizations.

Civil society organisations have mobilised to denounce human rights violations and the political situation in Brazil in various national and international fora. **Thus, the organisations engaged in documenting and denouncing to the Public Prosecution, the National Congress, the National Human Rights Council, the Superior Electoral Court, the Attorney General's Office and other authorities, different situations, such as:** socio-environmental crimes, fake news, attempts to prevent communities from voting (especially indigenous ones) and many other political and electoral violations that were taking place. In addition, the organizations organized themselves to advocate in forums, assemblies and other international spaces, seeking to raise awareness about the rights violations that were still ongoing in the country and to obtain support from the international community.

Another important front of action reported by the advocates was the construction of mechanisms of popular protection and self-protection, through which the organisations sought to formulate guidelines and safety recommendations for their activists, partners and the population, especially with regard to political campaigns and actions in territories with a large presence of “Bolsonaristas”.

**We were very concerned about the forms of protection and self-protection that we and our partners needed to have, including recommendations and guidelines.**

**The face-to-face actions carried out in this period were also planned. It was not recommended that one or two people should do it alone.**

**(Roseane Dias  
- SMDH)**

# How do you assess the current **situation of democracy and human rights in Brazil** and what would be the challenges for its strengthening?

The results of the polls in 2022 signal great progress in relation to democracy and respect for human rights and advocates, but there is still a long way to go, as the context is one of profoundly weakened democracy in Brazil. In this sense, one of the great challenges is to overcome the way in which hatred, discrimination and disbelief in democracy and politics itself have been fostered in our population, and how this directly affects the communities and social groups with whom we work and whose rights we defend.

Brazil is divided, and the leaderships pay attention all the time to the fact that although Bolsonaro was defeated, Bolsonarism and its anti-democratic attacks are still active, and to reverse this situation that puts us all at risk, intense grassroots work will be necessary. In addition, strengthening our democracy also involves holding accountable the agents who have promoted discourses of hate in recent years.

In the institutional field, there is also a lot of work to be done, and the moment is one of reconstruction and resumption. In various areas of the State there have been attempts (many of them successful) to institutionalise human rights violations, so, in order to protect and strengthen our democracy, it is essential to recover the institutions and rebuild everything that has been destroyed in the field of rights. This exercise necessarily involves translating our agendas and demands into budgetary frameworks, multi-annual plans, public policies and effective actions to implement the human rights agenda.

Another major challenge for the strengthening of democracy and human rights in Brazil is to ensure effective spaces for participation and social control, because the democracy and the country we want will not be built from the Planalto Palace, the Ministries or any other governmental body on its own, but from the will of the people. Thus, it is necessary to strengthen instances of participation with the protagonism of social movements and organised civil society, as well as strengthening the political training of the bases oriented towards a perspective of citizenship exercise that goes beyond voting.

**Democracy is a process under construction. One of the biggest challenges is to guarantee that this is, with deeds an actions, a participative democracy, with active and not passive citizenship.**

**(Irene Maria dos Santos - Ibrace)**

# What are the **challenges for strengthening the work of the organisations and movements** in which human rights advocates work?

In the opinion of those interviewed, there are many challenges to strengthening human rights organisations and movements in Brazil.

An important challenge reported can be translated especially in the speech by Adriana Ramos (ISA): "It is necessary that the government recognizes the role of CSOs and that new state policies to support civil society are established, including policies that are permanent and consolidated in such a way that any other more anti-democratic government will not find it easy to dismantle. Thus, much was said about the importance of the government recognising the countryside as part of democracy building and stimulating social participation. In addition, the issue of funding and investment for the sustainability, structuring and strengthening of organisations and movements was very present as a fundamental challenge.

Another very present challenge was the strengthening of the networking of organisations and movements, seeking the continuity of the strategy of articulation and organisation processes both for collective actions and for the fulfilment of their important role in dialogue, social control and contribution to the construction of public policies. In this sense, an example was brought by Cacique Babau: "The indigenous struggle has to take advantage of the Lula government not only to demarcate land, but to give access to technology so that we, the indigenous people, can work the land. But not the way the government wants, but the way we work. Furthermore, the need was cited for the struggle so that democracy, human rights, the right to health and essential policies are not seen as government policies, but as State policies, so that there are no setbacks like those that have marked the last six years. (Getúlio Vargas Junior - Conam).

Acting over the grassroots, with a more intense presence in the territories and peripheries, fighting Bolsonarism, working with political training, "listening and helping people to organise" (Dito, CMP), forming new leaders was another challenge brought to human rights organisations.

With regard to the defence of the advocates, the need to build a serious policy to guarantee the lives of these advocates was emphasised, as well as a greater and more intense awareness-raising of the population about the importance of this struggle.

**The first challenge is to understand that the construction of democracy in Brazil, the democratisation process of the Brazilian State and its public policies, necessarily passes through the protagonism of social entities and movements in Brazil.**

**(Leonardo Pinho  
- Unisol Brasil  
and Abrasme)**



photo: pexels

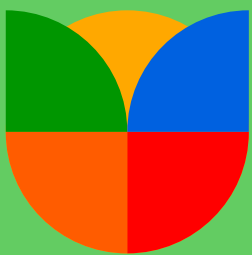
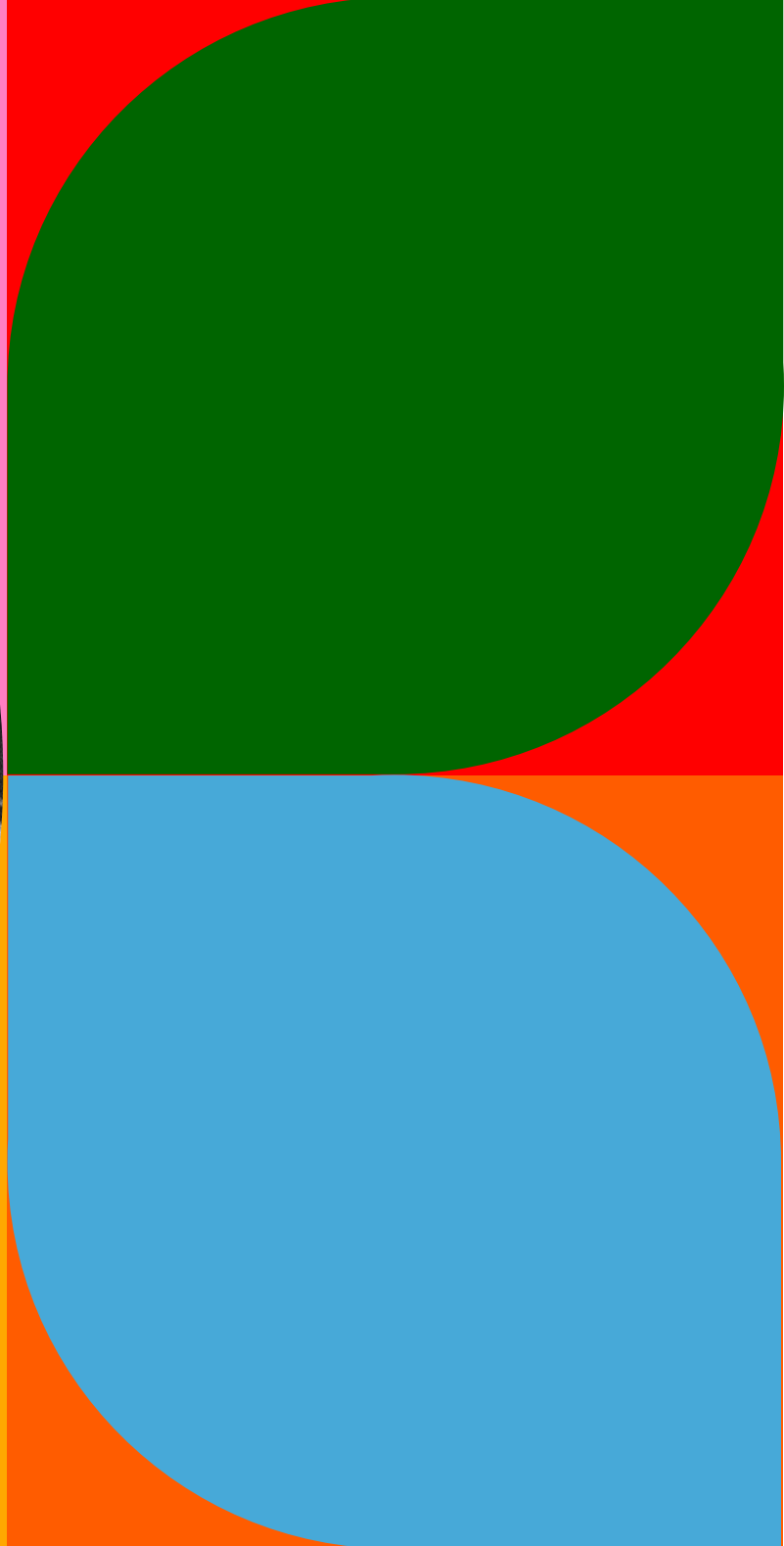
**The networks and articulations are also extremely important at this moment: Along, the Platform for the Reform of the Political System, the Frente Brasil Popular, Frente Brasil Povo sem Medo are fundamental spaces for the strengthening of civil society.**

**We need to collectively make our strategic planning as civil society.**

**(Makota Celinha - Cenarab)**







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