



PUBLIC NOTE

AGAINST THE VIOLENCE IN RURAL AREAS

President Bolsonaro has repeatedly used security as an alleged argument to hold often violent opinions that trigger hate among groups. That fact for itself shows how the President lacks understanding of the position he now occupies and its related attributions. By announcing that he will submit a draft bill to the Congress which allows farmers to shoot trespassers of their private property with no penalties, Bolsonaro is clearly defending – and granting – a license to kill. On top of that, by saying that this is “a measure to fight violence in rural areas”, he is confirming that his government has no effective public policies for security and therefore arming the population and illegally outsourcing security services are acceptable solutions.

No country should take a stand on social issues such as land and wealth concentration through armed combat actions and police force, let alone the division of society in two groups: those who deserve to live and those who do not, particularly if the former are landowners and the latter are peasants, landless workers or groups that struggle for land and territory. This is the logic defended by the present government, as it sees social movements and groups that fight for land as trespassers. However, at the same time, the State is lenient and turns a blind eye on farmers and land grabbers that exploit and trespass on private properties or environment protection areas. The struggle for land and territory is legitimate, and therefore organized social movements and landless workers are entitled to claim for an Agrarian Reform, as well as to occupy any unproductive area. Likewise, indigenous peoples and traditional communities are entitled to their territories. In that sense, it is not acceptable or plausible that a government in a democratic regime takes sides, authorizing and encouraging that landowners make use of force and violence to deal with those who fight legitimately for their rights.

The Brazilian Federal Constitution is clear: property is a right. However, the same Constitution says that the land must have a social function. For that reason, when groups and movements organize themselves to fight land concentration or to ensure their right to their territories, their struggle is aligned with the Constitution. The

protection of private property cannot be above the peasants' right to dignity, or the indigenous and traditional peoples' right to their livelihood. There is an ethical, humanistic principle in defending that land concentration is immoral whenever it fails to comply with the greater principle of its social function, which is more relevant than private property in itself.

Finally, a president must not subtract from the State its own power to manage conflicts, to investigate, prosecute and punish, by encouraging people to "take justice in their own hands" and "defend themselves". From that aspect, the Federal Constitution provides for no safeguard for citizens under any circumstances. Affirming that landowners have permission to kill undermines all civilizational and constitutional principles. No citizen is above the law. According to the 1988 Constitution, we are ruled by the principle of equality.

It is terrifying that a country's leading authority says that landowners are free to shoot. By doing so, president Jair Bolsonaro is disseminating hate and encouraging society to conflict. Those who celebrate that statement must understand that president Bolsonaro's proposal puts landowners in a situation of unlawfulness. Even if the president says there is a permission to kill people, the Brazilian legislation provides for penalties applicable for that crime. We hereby take a stance against the proposed changes that aim to include the exclusion of liability in the Brazilian penal code!

More than ever, we must strengthen our alliances **against violence in rural areas and everywhere else!**

Brasília, March 30, 2019.

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