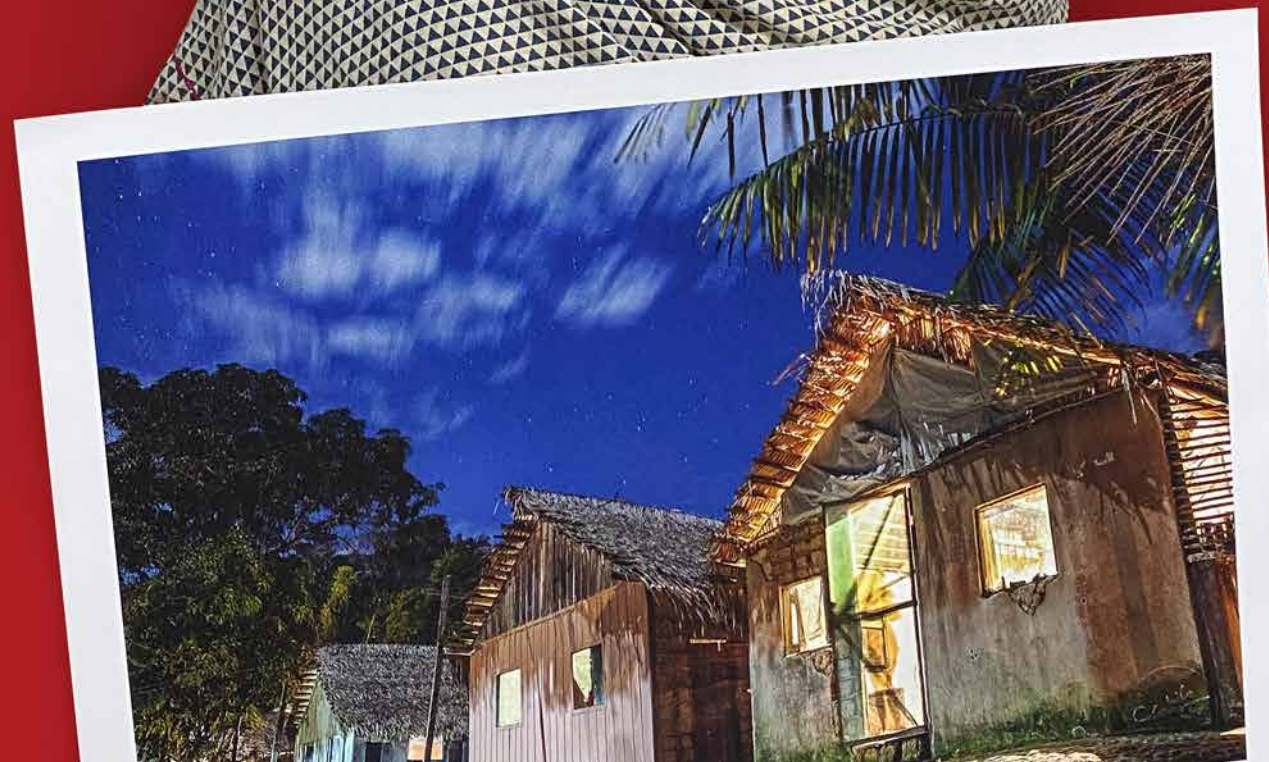


ANNUAL REPORT

2020



#RespiraLilo



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Cover photo: activist Daniela Silva is a member of the Xingu Vivo Movement (Pará State) and took part in the International Human Rights Colloquium in 2019. She holds an image produced by her partner, Lilo Clareto, a photographer committed to the defense of human and environmental rights and to the protection of forest peoples. Lilo passed in April 2021, a victim of Covid-19. The cover of this publication is a tribute to them and to so many families who lost their families due to the pandemic.

Annual Report 2020

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS



Juana Kweitel
executive director



Camila Asano
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Marcos Fuchs
*legal and finance
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“Conectas is needed now more than ever”. This is a statement we have heard repeatedly of late by many people we work with. In addition to being a sign of backing and support, this phrase has shown us the scale of our responsibility in a year marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and the rising authoritarianism of the Bolsonaro government.

Conectas took an active and purposeful stand, working intensively to protect the rights of those who need them most. There were many complaints, mobilizations, interventions and proposals that made a difference and inflicted significant defeats on the government’s conservative project. We sought to work conscientiously and responsibly so as not to overshadow the work of our partners nor embark on initiatives in which we would be unable to follow our standards: persistence, technical rigor and impact.

The vitality with which we worked in 2020 is a result of the institutional strengthening of Conectas. Being a solid organization gave us the ability to adapt quickly to remote work and allowed us to anticipate risks.

The partnerships and trusting relationships established with NGOs and social movements were also fundamental in 2020, when attacks were made simultaneously on different agendas. Our already

consolidated presence in decision-making spaces such as the National Congress and the UN allowed us to maintain our capacity for dialogue, even in the remote dynamics of the pandemic.

The recognition of our success in the courts was also crucial and indicates that the decision to strengthen our strategic litigation was the right one. Examples of this were our work in the ADPF Favelas Case, which caused the Supreme Court to rule against police operations being conducted in Rio de Janeiro during the pandemic.

In spite of so many emergencies, we tried not to focus our work only on urgent matters and on the short term. Combating setbacks has taken up a lot of our energy and resources, but we continue to work towards the future that we want: fairer, more democratic, more pluralistic.

We are grateful for the tireless and fearless work of the team, which has remained firm and active. We would also like to thank the members of our Board, the foundations and donors who placed their trust in us once again and the many organizations and social movements that stood with us throughout 2020.

*Enjoy reading
our report!*

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Conectas

WHO WE ARE

We are a civil society organization dedicated to the promotion and defense of human rights. Created in 2001 through a joint effort by professionals, academics and activists, Conectas was born with the goal of integrating and strengthening the international human rights movement, especially in the countries of the Global South. We work on the struggle for equality of rights through an extensive network of partners and on several fronts to propose solutions, prevent setbacks and denounce violations. We want to promote positive changes for people, especially for the most vulnerable groups.

OUR MISSION

To enforce and promote human rights and combat inequalities to build a fair, free and democratic society from a Global South perspective.

OUR VISION

To address injustices and propose solutions that have a positive impact on people's lives, particularly the most vulnerable in society.

WE WORK

by connecting movements, organizations and activists. Together we work to influence key actors and decision-makers to guarantee rights, justice and civil society participation in the decisions that affect the community.



OUR INITIATIVES

PROGRAM

Fighting Institutional Violence

INITIATIVE

People deprived of liberty

Control of law enforcement
and the use of force

Drug policy

Arms control

WHAT WE DO

We work to end mass incarceration and for the State to observe the law and guarantee the dignity of persons deprived of liberty.

We monitor violations and abusive use of force by agents of the State, calling for codes of conduct, the reduction of police lethality and external and internal control mechanisms.

We propose an approach to the drug problem that focuses on public health instead of criminal policy and highly militarized police action.

We work to consolidate public policies to control the ownership and bearing of firearms and to track guns and ammunition. At the same time, we also work to stop the abusive use of less-lethal weapons.

PROGRAM

Strengthening Democratic Space

INITIATIVE

Defense of civil society

Migration and asylum

Religious mobilizations and the rights agenda

Defense of racial affirmative action

Right to protest

WHAT WE DO

We denounce and block initiatives to criminalize and limit the work of human rights organizations, movements and defenders.

We defend public policies that observe the principles of Brazil's New Migration Law and that respect the rights of migrants and refugees.

We defend a Secular State, freedom of religion and religious pluralism.

We work towards the formulation of public policies that promote racial equality, that consider the specific needs of black Brazilians and that combat discrimination.

We work to guarantee the constitutional right to freedom of expression and assembly.

Defense of Socioenvironmental Rights

Combating contemporary slavery and precarious work

Impact of the extractive industry

Financing for development

Climate justice

We work to strengthen public policies that combat contemporary slavery.

We denounce the impacts of large-scale projects that affect the lives of traditional communities and the environment in a drastic and permanent manner.

We monitor and encourage human rights policies adopted by development finance institutions.

We seek to adapt political, economic and social processes to the commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Fighting Institutional Violence

Programs

VICTORY FOR GRASSROOTS LITIGATION: SUPREME COURT BANS POLICE OPERATIONS IN FAVELAS DURING PANDEMIC

While the entire population was in quarantine to protect against Covid-19, another brutal death of a black teenager made the headlines in May 2020. João Pedro Matos, who was just 14 years old, was shot inside his home during a police operation in the Salgueiro favela complex in São Gonçalo, in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro.

The news prompted a coalition of organizations, including Conectas, to file a petition in the Supreme Court to suspend police operations in Rio de Janeiro during the Covid-19 health emergency.

The request was made in the records of ADPF Case 635, which calls for the alignment of the state's security policy with national and international human rights standards. In a historic decision, Justice Edson Fachin accepted the request that was later ratified by a full session of the Court.

In the month of August, there was a new victory: the justices granted other important conditions to protect the rights of the population of the favelas and reduce violence during police actions:



A ban on the police firing guns from armored helicopters;



A restriction on police operations around schools and hospitals;



The preservation of crime scenes and no undue removal of bodies;



Documentation of forensic evidence and autopsy reports by the police forensic bodies to enable the possibility of independent reviews;



Investigations should meet the requirements of the Minnesota Protocol: they should be prompt, effective and thorough, as well as independent, impartial and transparent.

“

The pandemic has exposed the cruelty of conducting these types of armed Military Police operations in the favelas just when families need to stay at home because of the measures to contain the virus. However, ADPF Case 635 is not restricted to the health emergency. It challenges Rio de Janeiro's entire public security policy that, historically, has turned communities into a stage of genocide

”

– Gabriel Sampaio, coordinator of the program to Combat Institutional Violence at Conectas

A HISTORIC CASE

For the first time, NGOs, social groups and movements engaged with favelas and the mothers of victims of police operations have taken legal action against the state of Rio de Janeiro over its security policy. The **ADPF (Allegation of Violation of a Fundamental Precept) Case No. 635**, known as the “ADPF Favelas Case”, is a lawsuit proposed by the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) and jointly drafted by the Public Defender’s Office of the State of Rio de Janeiro and the organizations Educafro, Justiça Global, Redes da Maré, Conectas, Movimento Negro Unificado, Iser, IDMJR, Coletivo Papo Reto, Coletivo Fala Akari, Rede de Comunidades and Movimento contra a Violência and Mães de Manguinhos, which were all admitted as amicus curiae in the case. The legal action calls for the **gross violations caused by the public security policy** of the state of Rio de Janeiro against the black and poor population of the urban outskirts and favelas to be recognized and remedied.

LIVES SAVED

The ruling by the Supreme Court to suspend police operations exposed the inefficiency of the armed strategy of public security policy in Rio de Janeiro. A report by GENI (Study Group of New Illegalisms), of the Fluminense Federal University, refutes the thesis that the Supreme Court ruling would threaten the security of Rio de Janeiro’s citizens.

According to the report, the ban on police operations saved at least 288 lives in 2020, reducing police lethality by 34% compared to the year before. There was also no increase in crime. On the contrary: over the same period, there was a reduction of 39% in crimes against property and 24% in crimes against life.

Want to read the full report? Use the QR code:



COVID-19 IN PRISONS



Photo: Shutterstock

Brazil has the world's third largest prison population, with 758,000 persons deprived of liberty and an overcrowding rate of more than 50%. Moreover, it is well known that a large number of these inmates are HIV-positive or have tuberculosis, pneumonia, diabetes, hypertension or other pre-existing illnesses – which are known to be risk factors for Covid-19.

This situation, compounded by the high infection rate of the disease, posed a real threat to life in prison. In March, the Criminal Justice Network, of which Conectas is part, published its recommendations to avoid the spread of the novel coronavirus in Brazilian prisons. They included a reduction of pre-trial detention and decarceration of people from risk groups. Recommendation 62/2020, which was signed by the president of the National Justice Council and the Supreme Court, Justice Dias Toffoli, provided guidelines for decarceration and was sent to representatives of all courts across the country.

However, what followed was a sequence of rights violations such as the lack of access to health, obstacles to decarceration, incommunicability, problems with the registration of deaths, riots and the use of precarious temporary structures to hold prisoners.

In response to this, the CNPCT (National Committee to Combat and Prevent Torture), MNPCT (National Mechanism to Combat and Prevent Torture), CNDH (National Human Rights Council) and more than 200 organizations from all over the country submitted to the UN and the OAS a complaint against the management of Covid-19 in Brazilian prisons, calling on the country to explain the violation of international recommendations and to take the necessary measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus in the prison population.

“Brazilian prison perpetuates immeasurable rights violations, which have been further intensified in the context of a pandemic. The absence of measures to prevent the uncontrolled spread of Covid-19 in prisons is progressively culminating in the death of persons deprived of liberty”

Excerpt from the urgent appeal submitted to the UN and the OAS

IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS IN BRAZILIAN PRISONS

Prison population



759,518

is the number of persons deprived of liberty in Brazil



228,976

are pre-trial detainees without a conviction



15,214

are people with comorbidities*



9,489

are people over the age of 60



282

are pregnant or breastfeeding women

Source: **Infopen** – Jun 2020

**Comorbidities are illnesses that increase the chances of contracting other diseases, in this case Covid-19. Among the existing comorbidities, Infopen only analyzes the presence of HIV and tuberculosis among prisoners.*

CUSTODY HEARINGS BY VIDEO CONFERENCE

In July, the National Justice Council approved Resolution 329/2020 that banned pre-trial custody hearings from being held by video conference during the coronavirus pandemic. However, this did not last long: five months later, a new rule was issued authorizing virtual sessions.

Nearly 80 human rights organizations, including Conectas, as well as public defenders and lawyers from across Brazil sent an official letter to Justice Luiz Fux, president of the National Justice Council,

requesting the maintenance of the ban on the use of video conferencing for custody hearings. The organizations noted that seven states once again started holding in-person custody hearings, as the essential purpose of these hearings requires. This has been possible through the strict observance of health protocols.

The adoption of the rule that authorizes custody hearings to be held by video conference could result in the international accountability of Brazil.

Provided for in the American Convention on Human Rights, the custody hearing is a procedure that serves to assess the legality of the detention and whether the detained person has been subjected to acts of torture or other types of degrading treatment during the police contact. This assessment must be carried out by a judge within 24 hours of the arrest. The procedure in a virtual format does not serve its function, both because it would not be possible for the judge to identify evidence of torture, and because it would not guarantee an adequate environment for listening to the detained person.



#YouCantSeeTortureOnTV. The 78 organizations that signed the official letter launched a campaign to demonstrate that video is not an adequate tool for preventing mistreatment and torture. Given its virtual nature, it does not give the detainees the right conditions to report possible aggressions suffered at the time of their arrest. Without in-person custody hearings, an arrested person is at risk of not being seen personally by any executors of the law.

SUPREME COURT RULING IMPOSES LIMIT ON OVERCROWDING FOR YOUTH DETENTION

Conectas is an amicus curiae in the case that determined, in August, the end of overcrowding in units of the youth detention system across the country, ordered by the Second Chamber of the Supreme Court. In his vote, the rapporteur of the case Justice Edson Fachin suggested a number of alternatives to reduce overcrowding at centers that are already operating over capacity, among them the adoption of a maximum number of people in each unit and the reassessment of cases of adolescents in custody for non-violent offenses, by scheduling hearings in the state courts.

The habeas corpus was originally filed by the Espírito Santo State Public Defender's Office in 2017. Afterwards, the Public Defender's Offices of other states, such as Bahia, Ceará, Espírito Santo, Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro, among others, joined the petition. As a result, the Supreme Court decision was extended to include all states.

SMALL-TIME TRAFFICKING IS NOT A "HEINOUS CRIME", SAYS SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE

In September, the 6th Chamber of the Superior Court of Justice – Brazil's highest appellate court for non-constitutional matters – granted a collective Habeas Corpus banning the São Paulo justice system from handing down sentences in secure prison facilities to people convicted of the crime known as "privileged trafficking", i.e. first-time offenders with good records and no connections to criminal organizations.

"Privileged trafficking" was recognized as a petty crime by the Supreme Court in 2016, distinguishing it from "drug trafficking", which is a serious felony that carries a heavy sentence without the right to amnesty, pardon or bail.

In his vote, the rapporteur of the case Judge Rogerio Schietti Cruz mentioned the report "Prison at Any Cost", produced by Conectas and IDDD (Defense of the Right to a Defense Institute) about how the São Paulo State Court systematically fails to comply with the Supreme Court ruling on privileged trafficking.

In the state of São Paulo, there were

1.018 men
and **82 women**

in March 2020 serving a minimum sentence for drug trafficking in secure prisons who could benefit from the ruling.

Source: **SAP (Prison Administration Department)**

POLICE VIOLENCE IN SÃO PAULO

After a series of attempts at dialogue with the governor of São Paulo, João Doria, over the increase in police lethality in the state, Conectas, together with civil society organizations and other groups, decided to go to court against the high number of deaths caused by law enforcement.

The São Paulo Public Prosecutor's Office filed, in 2019, a public civil action calling for an end to summary executions and improvements to the external and social control of the police. The São Paulo State Public Defender's Office is also involved in the case. Civil society organizations and representatives of the black movement submitted a request for amicus curiae in the case.

Still on the topic of police violence in São Paulo, the organizations Conectas, the Brazilian Drug Policy Platform, the “É de Lei” Community Center and the Human Rights Advocacy Center for the Homeless Population (NDDHPR) publicly condemned the escalation of police violence against drug users in the neighborhood known as Cracolândia (Crackland), in the center of the city of São Paulo, due to ongoing crackdowns by the municipal and state governments of São Paulo. The organizations called for a transparent investigation into the abuses, within the legal time frame, and an opening of dialogue with civil society to coordinate the services provided in the region.



In the first quarter of 2020, São Paulo registered the **highest increase in police lethality on record**, of more than 20% compared to the first quarter of 2019. Data from the first half of the year showed a record **514 people killed by the police**, despite the pandemic.

Source: SSP-SP (São Paulo State Public Security Department)



Defense of Socioenvironmental Rights

Programs

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY



Photo: Shutterstock

Given the lack of policies from the government to protect the environment and the disregard shown by President Jair Bolsonaro in his speech at the 75th UN General Assembly, downplaying the seriousness of the fires that devastated parts of the Pantanal wetlands and Amazon rainforest, Conectas joined a network ten civil society organizations that prepared one of the most comprehensive and important social and environmental cases ever filed with the Supreme Court to demand the effective reinstatement of PPCDam (Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon).

The ADPF (Allegation of Violation of a Fundamental Precept) Case No. 760, submitted to the Supreme Court, was accompanied by a thorough report with data and analysis on the destruction of the forest and the dismantling of environmental policies by the Bolsonaro government.


The case calls for the combat of deforestation and for the country to go back to complying with the targets established by Brazilian legislation and international agreements assumed by Brazil on climate change, which in practice were abandoned in 2019.

Another case in the Supreme Court in 2020 with major implications for the environment was ADPF Case No. 708, which challenges the inaction of the Ministry of the Environment given the suspension, since the beginning of the Bolsonaro government, of the National Fund on Climate Change – one of the main sources of funding for the fight against global warming in the country. Conectas is also an amicus curiae in this case and took part in the public hearing convened by the Supreme Court.

See here the
executive summary of
the case submitted to the
Supreme Court:



9,205 km²
or **1 million**
and 100
thousand
soccer fields
was the size of the
deforestation
from 2019–2020*



An increase of
34.5%
compared to the
previous period

The number of
fines
for destruction of
the Amazon forest
fell 61%
in the past two years**



Sources: *Inpe and **Ibama

MINERS OUT, COVID OUT

As if the well-known offensives of the government against indigenous peoples were not enough, since the start of the novel coronavirus pandemic the situation has worsened, mainly due to illegal mining activities on protected lands. Because of this, a campaign led by the Yanomami and Ye'kwana tribes, which had the support of various civil society organizations including Conectas, called for the removal of more than 20,000 illegal miners from their land. Called "Miners Out, Covid Out", the campaign ended in December with 439,000 signatures and an event in Brasília that illuminated the walls of the National Congress.

The IACHR (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) issued a resolution in July that granted precautionary measures for the protection of the Yanomami and Ye'kwana indigenous peoples. According to the IACHR, these populations are facing a serious situation and they run the risk of irreparable damage.



SUPREME COURT RECOGNIZES LEGITIMACY OF APIB TO FILE CASES

The Supreme Court took the unprecedented step to recognize APIB (Association of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil) as an organization that has legitimacy to file lawsuits challenging constitutionality. The decision was given in the ADPF Case No. 709, which called on the government to adopt urgent measures to guarantee the protection of indigenous peoples during the pandemic. Conectas participated in the case as an amicus curiae.

According to Luiz Eloy Terena, legal adviser to APIB, this recognition removed the legal obstacle that existed before, as “for a long time, indigenous peoples were not considered rights-holders, they could not speak for themselves, they could not access the Judiciary on their own behalf; they always needed to depend on someone else. This decision is very significant in terms of overcoming indigenous guardianship, overcoming coloniality of law and also reasserting that indigenous peoples are rights-holders.”

Coronavirus and indigenous peoples in Brazil

Source: National Committee for Indigenous Life and Memory, created by APIB (Association of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil) - Data compiled until December 9, 2020



41,250
CONFIRMED
CASES



889
DEATHS



161
GROUPS
AFFECTED



VIOLATIONS IN SUAPE



Photo: João Paulo Brito/Conectas

In 2020, the analysis process was concluded on the violations committed by the multinational Van Oord against traditional communities in the region of Suape, on the southern coast of the state of Pernambuco, where the Suape Industrial Port Complex has been located for more than four decades.

Developed by the NCP (National Contact Point), the body that assesses compliance by multinationals with the guidelines of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), the report identified severe environmental and human rights impacts against the communities that live there. Recommendations were presented

to be adopted by the company, among them the installation of artificial corals – in an attempt to remedy irreparable damage to the local ecosystem – and the implementation of a health program for the people of the region.

The NCP was based on a petition that identified several environmental impacts and violations committed against the original inhabitants of the area during the dredging of the Port of Suape. The petition was signed by the Z8 Fishing Colony, formed by families from the region of Gaibu, by the Suape Forum, a network of fishing and shellfishing associations, and by the civil society organizations Conectas and Both Ends.



Membership of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) provides advantages in international loans and negotiations, but it requires the implementation of a series of fiscal and environmental measures, as well as public policies in various areas. The Bolsonaro government had secured formal support from the United States for Brazil's bid to join the OECD, but with Trump's departure the situation has taken on new dimensions, with the need to show a minimal commitment to environmental issues and respect for the rule of law and for democracy to continue its candidacy.

“

Among the compensated families, many were sent to live in the outskirts of neighboring cities, as is the case with former residents of Tatuoca Island. These people were transferred to urban areas far from the territory where they were born and raised and where they cannot use their professional skills, and working in the territory became a crime

”

THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY ON HUMAN RIGHTS

More than a year after the collapse of the tailings dam owned mining company Vale in Brumadinho, state of Minas Gerais – a disaster that caused the death of at least 270 people and the disappearance of eleven others – Conectas continues to denounce the case internationally.

At an event staged by the OECD's Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct in June, Conectas presented a study produced together with FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), SOMO (Center for Research on Multinational Corporations) and the local NGO Justiça nos Trilhos, among others, that identifies widespread violations of environmental, labor and welfare rights by the Brazilian private sector. The disaster in Brumadinho was illustrated as an example of a business practice that violated rights.

The Brumadinho case was also addressed by Conectas at the launch of the “Mind the Gap” project, an international consortium of civil society organizations whose goal is to seek justice and reparations for communities affected by multinational companies.

In October, Conectas co-organized the seminar “Social and Environmental Rights Violations in Brazil” with the UN special rapporteur on toxic wastes, Marcos Orellana. The event was attended by representatives of social movements and communities affected by companies and industrial complexes from Brumadinho, Suape (state of Pernambuco), Piquiá de Baico (Maranhão) and the Guarani-Kaiowá Indigenous Land (Mato Grosso do Sul).

SUMMARY

Weaknesses in responsible business conduct policy in Brazil



CASE STUDY

Vale rejects responsibility for dam disasters by pointing to certification



SEMINAR

Social and environmental rights violations in Brazil: a dangerous and tragic path



Want to learn more about these studies and seminar?

See below:

THE PUBLIC SPENDING CAP IN THE HEALTH EMERGENCY

In view of the burden on the public health services, Conectas and its partners filed in the Supreme Court in March a petition for the immediate suspension of Constitutional Amendment 95 – the one that places a federal spending cap on public services. The organizations noted that social policies are currently in a state of profound deterioration on account of funding cuts at the same time as demand for services is growing due to a sharp increase in poverty and extreme poverty as a result of the economic crisis and the deterioration of job security.

In addition to the suspension of the spending cap, the petition highlighted the importance of an emergency action plan to tackle the pandemic with actions in healthcare, food security, social services and education, which includes the guarantee of a nationwide school food grant for all children left without school meals for the duration of the period classes are halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

FORMER MINISTER IN THE WORLD BANK

A letter signed by nearly 270 civil society organizations, businesspeople, political figures, economists, actors and actresses and cultural producers, in addition to movements associated with education, asked the World Bank to reject the nomination of Brazil's former education minister, Abraham Weintraub, to the Executive Board of Directors at the institution. The document was submitted to the Executive Board of Directors of the World Bank and to the embassies of eight countries that need to approve the nomination of the former minister to the position. They are: Colombia, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, Philippines, Suriname, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Panama. In the letter, the signatories claim that Weintraub does not possess the "minimum ethical, professional and moral qualifications to occupy the seat of the 15th Executive Board of Directors of the World Bank".

Read the letter in full:





Strengthening Democratic Space

Programs

DISCRIMINATION AT THE BORDERS



Photo: Shutterstock

If, on the one hand, the Bolsonaro government downplayed the risks of Covid-19, on the other he used the pandemic as an excuse to restrict the rights of migrants and refugees. After a decree from the federal government that closed the Brazilian borders and established a restriction on the entry of refugees, several organizations published a technical report criticizing the disproportionality of the measure, especially the possibility of returning people to countries where their life may be at risk due to political persecution or war.

Against this backdrop, Conectas and a number of religious institutions and civil society organizations that work on the defense of migrant rights, in partnership with the Federal Public Defender's Office, filed a Public Civil Action against the forced removal, without a court order, carried out by the municipal government of Boa Vista (state of

Roraima) of more than a hundred Venezuelans from an occupation in the municipality.

In September, restrictions were relaxed to allow the entry by air of tourists and foreigners with residency and investor visas, for example. The situation was exactly the opposite for vulnerable migrants: entry remained closed for people seeking asylum in the country and specific, stricter restrictions were placed on people coming from Venezuela. In December, after the land borders had been closed to migrants and refugees for more than nine months, a technical report from CEPEDISA (Center for Research on Health Law), of the University of São Paulo, commissioned by Conectas, pointed out that the federal government's restriction, which had been in effect since March, is unjustifiable and has no scientific basis. The report also stated that the decrees issued by the federal government are selective and discriminatory.



In April, the TRF-1 (Federal Appeals Court of the First Region) banned the municipality of Boa Vista, in the state of Roraima, from restricting health care for migrants in the public health system. In February, municipal law 2,074/2020, which established the discriminatory rule on treatment for Venezuelans in public hospitals and health clinics in the city, was challenged in a public civil action filed by the Federal Public Defender's Office in partnership with Conectas Human Rights.

DOCTORS PREVENTED FROM WORKING

Despite the urgent need for health professionals as a result of the pandemic, and bucking the trend in other countries, Brazil did not relax its legislation for hiring doctors trained abroad.

Moreover, the country has not staged the Revalida – the examination needed for these professionals to obtain their license to practice medicine in Brazil – since 2017. As a result of this, several migrant and human rights organizations, including Conectas, made an appeal for the Ministry of Education and INEP (Anísio Teixeira National Educational Research and Study Institute), the body responsible for preparing the examination, to bring forward the publication of the public notice for the Revalida.

In a letter to the president of the body, the organizations pointed out the numerous postponements of the examination and called for compliance with Law 13.959/19, which determines that it be applied twice yearly.

CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE OF NGOS

In March, Conectas filed a public civil action requesting the repeal of the decrees that permitted a secret agent from ABIN (Brazilian Intelligence Agency) to join the government team responsible for relations with non-governmental organizations. A Federal Court in São Paulo suspended the appointment, banning the nomination of any other employee of ABIN to the position. The ruling was later overturned, but the agent was removed from the office and reassigned to another position. A report recently published by the Pública agency revealed the identity of the agent and exposed how the federal government has been placing intelligence agents inside the administrative machinery of São Paulo state.

This was not the first time that Bolsonaro sought to control the activities of third sector organizations. In January 2019, the president attempted to monitor the activity of non-governmental organizations through Provisional Executive Order No. 870, which established the basic organization of the bodies of the Presidency of the Republic and the Ministries. However, the part of the order referring to the control of NGOs was defeated in the National Congress after strong pressure from civil society.

RIGHTS OF THREATENED WOMEN



Photo: Shutterstock

The news made all the headlines: a ten-year-old girl who was raped by her uncle gets pregnant in the state of Espírito Santo. Brazilian law clearly permits the termination of pregnancy in these cases, but this did not stop a wave of violence and intimidation against the girl and the health professionals involved in the procedure.

The federal government, through the Ministry of Health, took advantage of the upheaval to publish a decree making it mandatory for doctors to notify the police in cases when there is evidence or confirmation of rape. In practice, people seeking an abortion now have to present evidence of the crime and the name of the perpetrator, making it even more difficult to obtain an abortion in cases permitted by law.

The measure was widely condemned by Brazilian civil society and nearly 350 organizations signed a joint statement against the decree. In September,

five opposition parties filed ADPF Case (Allegation of Violation of a Fundamental Precept) No. 737 in the Supreme Court.

Together with the organizations Geledés and Themis, Conectas was admitted as an amicus curiae in the case and their contribution to the judgment was fully formulated and signed by black women – the group most affected by policies to curtail reproductive rights.

On the international level, the governments of Brazil and the United States jointly sponsored a declaration that, on the pretext of establishing basic principles on the issue of women's health, intended to reaffirm the rejection of abortion and the defense of the heteronormative family. Called the Geneva Consensus Declaration, the document does not have the status of a treaty and was supported by only a few countries that are known to oppose women's rights.

In an interview with Conectas, Gabriela Rondon, co-director of the Anis Bioethics Institute, spoke about the difficulty of accessing legal abortion in Brazil. **Read here.**



PRESS FREEDOM AND THE BOLSONARO GOVERNMENT

Conectas continued to closely follow the Bolsonaro government's attacks on press freedom over the course of 2020. Threats and verbal aggression against press professionals by the President of the Republic and his sons have been commonplace. According to Fenaj (National Federation of Journalists), 58% of the attacks registered against journalists in 2019, the first year of the Bolsonaro government, came from the president himself.

Following a series of attacks on journalists and media outlets in the country, Conectas and Abraji (Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism) sent an official letter to Fiesp (São Paulo State Federation of Industries) ahead of an event attended by businesspeople and members of the Executive in São Paulo. The organizations requested the business community to include

the defense of press freedom on the agenda for the meeting, given the escalating attacks and threats on media outlets and journalists in the country.

A similar request was submitted to Rodrigo Maia, speaker of the Lower House of Congress at the time, pointing out that press freedom and the right to information are prerequisites for the rule of law and respect of democratic institutions. Maia agreed to act in defense of press freedom inside the Lower House and in dialogue with the other branches of government.

Finally, Conectas, in partnership with Abraji, Article 19, the Vladimir Herzog Institute and the rights organization Intervozes, asked the United Nations to closely monitor the situation of press freedom in Brazil. The request was made at the 43rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.



Photo: Shutterstock



Strategic Litigation

How we work

LAWSUITS TO PROMOTE CHANGE



Involvement in paradigmatic legal cases has been one of the ways used by Conectas to promote change and social impact. Strategic litigation is a tool to transform case law and set precedents, stop legislation that violates rights or demand enforcement of the law. In this respect, the work of Conectas consists of strengthening the capacity of Brazilian civil society to use the Judiciary to resist setbacks in human rights and the democratic rule of law.

Conectas has a team of lawyers ready to challenge in court or in the International Human Rights System any actions by governments or companies that violate the Constitution or international treaties to which Brazil is signatory, affect the rights of the most vulnerable groups or cause democratic

setbacks. They are sometimes cases that require skills and expertise in several areas of law, in addition to significant coordination with partners, an understanding of the political actors involved in each case and, of course, the mobilization of public debate.

With these qualities in mind, Conectas also seeks to strengthen the legal capacity of organizations by sharing strategies and implementing innovative communication formats to help people engage substantially in the defended causes.

Strategic litigation was a prominent feature of our work in 2020. See the table below for a brief assessment of the litigation actions developed by program:



IN 2020, WE GAVE ORAL STATEMENTS IN 9 CASES IN THE SUPREME COURT:



ADPF 722 –
ideological persecution
of public sector workers



ADPF 709 –
measures to protect
indigenous peoples in
the pandemic



ADPF 663 –
change in the procedure
for approving provisional
executive orders



ADPF 708 –
blocking of the
Climate Fund



ARE 959,620 –
abusive searches of
prison visitors



ADPF 509 –
slave labor
“dirty list”



HC 143,988 –
limit on overcrowding at
the UNINorte youth
detention center, in the
state of Espírito Santo



ADPF 635 –
ADPF Favelas Case – citizens’
initiative to tackle police
violence in Rio de Janeiro



ACO 3121 –
closure of the border with
Venezuela (oral statement
given by the NGO Missão Paz)



Advocacy

How we work

INFLUENCING NATIONAL POLICY

Inside Brazil, our advocacy work is focused on the National Congress and on monitoring the legislative agendas that affect human rights. We participate in public hearings and produce technical reports. We are a non-partisan organization and we call for transparency and the active participation of civil society in decision-making processes that affect the community.

MANIFESTO FOR TRANSPARENCY AND GUARANTEED SOCIAL PARTICIPATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

Conectas, in partnership with another 80 Brazilian civil society organizations signed a manifesto calling for transparency and guaranteed social participation in the debates in the National Congress during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The document presented, given the restrictions on the workings of the Lower House of Congress and the Senate, ten measures necessary for the democratic participation of civil society in the decisions taken by Congress on behalf of Brazilian society. The main measures to improve the existing channels were the adoption of new tools of social participation, including direct communication channels on the topics being voted, and actions that ensure active transparency in the Lower House of Congress and the Federal Senate and the broad disclosure of its acts and resolutions.



INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Conectas has had consultative status in the UN since 2006 and it was one of the first organizations in Brazil to use the United Nations and the OAS (Organization of American States) as forums for reporting violations committed by the Brazilian State, embarrassing it in the presence of other countries and forcing it to provide explanations to the international community on these abuses. In addition to lodging complaints, monitoring and influencing votes on important resolutions that affect the global understanding on issues related to human rights, Conectas supports other organizations and advocates from Brazil and the Global South to increase their participation in multilateral mechanisms.

RACISM: GEORGE FLOYD AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The American George Floyd was suffocated and killed by a white police officer while being filmed by mobile phone cameras. The seriousness of the case prompted the UN Human Rights Council to pass a resolution condemning racist conduct by law enforcement. It was the first time since the creation of the Council, in 2006, that a resolution focused on a violation that occurred in the United States.

In addition to following the vote on the resolution, Conectas spoke out about the need for Brazil to vote in favor, even though this would conflict with the policy of automatic alignment with the United States defined by the Bolsonaro administration.

Read our op-ed
on the issue here
(in Portuguese):



PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

With the support of Conectas and various civil society organizations, the Yanomami and Ye'kwana tribes secured a precautionary measure in the IACHR (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) calling on the Brazilian State to take action to combat the Covid-19 pandemic among indigenous peoples. According to the IACHR, these populations are facing a serious situation and they run the risk of irreparable damage. Precautionary measures are one of the tools existing in the international legal system that serve to protect rights and prevent violations. The granting of these measures and their adoption by the country does not stop a petition from being filed before the Inter-American system in which the country is summoned to answer for their alleged rights violations.

ADVOCACY IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

UN

Statements: total 9

43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council

- Violence against female journalists

44th session of the UN Human Rights Council

- State of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil
- Summary executions
- Freedom of expression
- System prison and Covid-19

45th session of the UN Human Rights Council

- Combating contemporary slavery
- Toxic Waste (Suape)
- Attacks on defenders of human rights of indigenous peoples
- Indigenous peoples and Covid-19

Urgent appeals sent in 2020: total 6

- Spending cap amendment and the response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- Situation of the Yanomami and Ye'kwana tribes in the pandemic
- Border closures in Brazil
- Emergency income support
- Campo Grande quilombola community
- State of the prison system in the pandemic

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Hearings: 2

- Freedom of expression in Brazil (177th period of sessions)
- Police violence and racism in the Americas (178th period of sessions)

The background is a solid orange color. On the left side, there are several thick, white, curved lines that sweep from the bottom left towards the top right, creating a sense of motion or a stylized 'C' shape. In the center-right area, the word "Institutional" is written in a bold, dark red, sans-serif font.

Institutional

DEAR HUMAN

In 2020, Conectas debuted in the podosphere! The weekly podcast called “Cara Pessoa”, produced in partnership with the newspaper Folha de S.Paulo, addressed the challenges of human rights and discussed their understanding and assimilation by society. In ten episodes, the program hosted by the journalist Fernanda Mena tackled issues such as freedom of expression, racism and whiteness, police violence, right to abortion, contemporary slavery and migration, among others. See the titles of the episodes below:

1. Rights for whom?
2. The malaise of inequality
3. Malala and the threats to education
4. The boundaries of freedom of expression
5. Justice is not revenge
6. Whiteness and structural racism
7. The engine of police violence
8. Invisible workers
9. The woman's body in a patriarchal world
10. Migration as a matter of life or death



Cara Pessoa is still available on all leading podcast platforms (in Portuguese).



ADPF FAVELAS CASE ON THE AGENDA

The ADPF-635 Case, better known as the “ADPF Favelas Case”, in which we served as amicus curiae, had major repercussions in the Brazilian press following the ruling of the Supreme Court to suspend police operations in the urban outskirts and favelas of Rio de Janeiro state during the pandemic. Drawing on the institutional support of Conectas, the newspaper Folha de S.Paulo produced a series of pieces that addressed the violations committed by the police in Rio de Janeiro against the black population from the favelas.

Read the special pieces (in Portuguese):



VLADIMIR HERZOG AWARD

The 42nd Vladimir Herzog Journalism Award, for which Conectas serves on the Organizing Committee, staged the ceremony to announce the winners in a public and online session for the first time, on account of the pandemic. This edition of the award received a record number of 1,059 entries, divided into six categories: Art (illustrations, caricatures and cartoons), photography and written, video, audio and multimedia journalism. The winners of the award participated in a virtual conversation circle about the stories behind their reporting.

Watch the Awards Ceremony on
YouTube (in Portuguese):



PUBLICATIONS



RIGHTS IN THE PANDEMIC BULLETIN

In July, Conectas and Cepedisa/USP (Center for Research on Health Law of the University of São Paulo) launched the Rights in the Pandemic Bulletin, an essential publication given the urgency that the Covid-19 pandemic imposed on Brazil and the world. In ten issues, the Bulletin conducts comprehensive research into all the legal and sub-legal norms issued by government in Brazil, whether on the federal, state or municipal level. The project, developed by a multidisciplinary team, conducted extensive documentary research to establish a database of norms, with the production of data for qualitative analysis of the potential impact on human rights, as well as the production of data for disaggregation and quantitative analysis, in particular cross-referencing data on the norms with epidemiological indicators.

See all the issues in the
virtual library of Conectas:



FOREIGN, NEVER AGAIN!

Also launched in 2020, this publication gives an overview of the drafting and passage of the Migration Law (13,445/2017) until its approval in 2017, a landmark in the establishment of the national migration policy that guarantees the rights of immigrants. It reveals the challenges, strategies and lessons learned from the political advocacy tactics used to convince lawmakers to vote for the bill. The publication is available for free online in Portuguese.

Access the report
(in Portuguese):



SUR – INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2020, SUR Journal released its 30th issue carrying a series of articles on the topic “Human Rights Defenders – their roots, faces and stories”. The publication has contributions from authors from 15 countries on the challenges facing people who work with rights advocacy given the escalation of violations observed around the world.

Among other topics, the articles address the long struggles of indigenous peoples in defense of their land, structural racism the high number of killings

among black youth from the urban outskirts, LGBTQI+ rights, violence against women and female prominence in activism against repression.

The journal also contains a **gallery of pictures** that portrays through art pressing human rights issues and personal experiences. The cover of the issue was designed from photos of a patchwork that represents experiences of human rights defenders around the world.



The publication is available
for free online in Portuguese,
English and Spanish.

Access the Journal:



SO LONG, COMPANION!

In April 2021, our dear colleague Christiane Cese passed away after a long battle against cancer. A source of inspiration to all of us, Chris had a personality that radiated a joy, courage and determination that was contagious.

As a member of the program to Combat Institutional Violence at Conectas since 2018, Chris had a sincere concern for the needs of the most vulnerable in society. Her professionalism was marked by a firmness of values and a commitment to the defense of human rights, the rights of women and racial justice.

In her work, she showed the same dedication that she applied to everything she loved: her parents, her religion, her friends, law school and black activism.

It was an honor and a privilege to have worked with her and we will preserve in our memory the happy times we shared together and honor them in our actions every day. We extend to the family a tender embrace and our deep sympathy. Christiane, present!



PROTECTION OF STAFF IN THE PANDEMIC AND PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY

The coronavirus health emergency imposed new formats for working all over the world. The staff at Conectas received substantial orientation and support for the introduction of the work-from-home format, and all scheduled trips were cancelled. Participation in events, meetings and negotiations was, whenever possible, transferred to the virtual format to ensure the health and protection of all.

In addition to promoting well-being, we are also committed to promoting greater racial diversity in the team. In 2020, this proposal was strengthened by the creation of an internal Antiracist Working Group, which expanded the scope of behavior and debate within the organization.



DATA FROM DECEMBER 31, 2020

EMPLOYEES



3 MANAGEMENT POSITION 4

0 NON-BRAZILIANS 2

TOTAL

36

VOLUNTEERING

1

VOLUNTEERS

AGE BRACKET



8
UP TO 25

15
26 TO 35

7
36 TO 45

6
46 TO 57

RACIAL DIVERSITY

4

2

MANAGEMENT
POSITION 1

0

WHITE
16



44%



PEOPLE
OF COLOR
17



47%



ORIENTAL
2



6%



NOT
DECLARED
1



3%

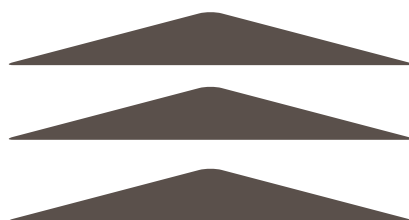


FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Conectas receives donations from national and international foundations, as well as cooperation agencies, that are aligned with the human rights agenda and that believe in the impact of our work. For us, the independence of our work is a fundamental value. This is why we do not accept donations from the Brazilian government or from national political parties, nor from the tobacco, alcohol and weapons.

REVENUES 2020

(AMOUNTS IN BRL)



Open Society Foundations	2,043,730
Oak Foundation Ltd	1,351,216
Luminate Foundation	1,305,294
Sigrid Rausing Trust	1,173,000
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	479,621
Instituto C&A	408,622
Stiftung Auxilium	313,568
The Ford Foundation	176,076
Laudes Foundation	73,352
Instituto Betty e A. Jacob Lafer	53,406
Instituto Clima e Sociedade - ICS	44,435
Derecho, Ambiente Y Recursos Naturales	38,048
Tides Foundation	36,399
Donations from individuals	30,184
Civicus	24,676
Volunteering	2,542
William S. Hein & Co. Inc	852
TOTAL	7,555,022

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The funds raised are fully invested in actions for the promotion and defense of human rights, in addition to the infrastructure and the human resources necessary to carry out the work. Our accounts are audited by an independent consulting firm and made publicly available on our website: <https://www.conectas.org/transparencia>. See below the expenses incurred in 2020 by each area of Conectas:

EXPENSES 2020

(AMOUNTS IN BRL)



Administrative and Financial	798,182
Fundraising	698,227
Institutional Communication	492,995
Institutional Development	342,290
Fighting Institutional Violence	1,438,306
Strengthening Democratic Space	1,696,641
Defense of Socioenvironmental Rights	1,118,315
Strategic Litigation	707,528
TOTAL	7,292,484



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