

**Council of Communities of Remnants of Quilombolas
in the Territory of the Far South of Bahia**

1st PUBLIC LETTER OF THE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES OF THE FAR SOUTH OF BAHIA

We, the Quilombolas gathered at the 9th Meeting of Quilombolas of the Far South of Bahia held in the Quilombola community of Volta Miúda, Caravelas municipality, Bahia state, on December 19, 2021, co-wrote and approved the 1st Public Letter of the Quilombola Communities of the Far South of Bahia, considering that:

- The recognition of the right to land by communities of remnants of Quilombolas is constitutional, as per Article 68 of the Acts of Transitory Constitutional Measures (ADTC) of the Brazilian Constitution;
- The constitutional recognition of the Quilombola territory as a cultural heritage of the Brazilian people is guaranteed by Articles 215 and 216 of the 1988 Federal Constitution;
- The Brazilian State recognizes the Quilombolas as subjects of law of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which deals with Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, as per Decree number 5051/2004 of the Presidency of the Republic;
- Law 12,288 instituted the Racial Equality Statute, meant to ensure to the black population the actualization of the equality of opportunities, the defense of individual, collective and diffuse ethnic rights, and to combat discrimination and all other forms of ethnic intolerance;
- Presidential Decree 4,887/2003 orders the Federal Government's administrative procedures for the process of identifying, demarcating and providing deeds for Quilombola territories, thus regularizing Quilombola territories;
- The recognition of the right to Quilombola lands in Bahia was regulated by the 1989 Constitution of the State of Bahia in article 51 of the Acts of the Transitory Measures (ADT), which, upon recognizing this right, provided a one-year time frame for the process of issuing deeds;
- Decree 6,040/2007 instituted the National Sustainable Development Policy of Traditional Peoples and Communities, which provides guidelines to actualize public policies in traditional territories;
- Presidential Decree 6,261/2007 instituted integrated management for the development of the Quilombola Social Agenda within the scope of the Quilombola Brazil Program;
- The State of Bahia has regulated Law 12,910/2013, which ensures that the executive branch will institute administrative procedures in order to regularize the *terras devolutas* [undesignated public lands] in the state's territory;
- State Decree 11,850/2009 instituted the State Policy for Communities of Remnants of Quilombolas.

We understand that this set of legal norms and administrative acts ensure to the Quilombolas of Brazil and of Bahia the right to land and to their territory, and their lack of implementation by the public and private authorities represents an absence of commitment by the Brazilian State to its Constitution, thus violating rights.

With this letter, we re-affirm that the Quilombola struggle happens on the land and on the territory, and without land there will be no social, cultural, economic or political development. For this reason we repudiate all the violence committed by the State of Bahia with its current economic growth policy, which has removed rights from the Quilombolas and guaranteed to foreign capital – by maintaining degrading practices such as those undertaken by corporations like **SUZANO** and **VERACEL**, among others – public and *devoluta* land, assets belonging to the people of Bahia, for the advance of eucalyptus monoculture plantation or any other venture that violates the rights of Quilombolas in Bahia, especially in the Far South. This policy has enhanced conflicts and taken away from Quilombola communities the right to develop on their land and ancestral territory.

We want the world to know that in the Far South of Bahia Identity Territory there exist 8 recognized Quilombola communities. These communities originated in the old Leopoldina Colony, a Swiss-German colony established in 1818 that prospered until abolition in 1888. At this place, slave labor was used to cultivate coffee. It was only in 2005, on the initiative of Remnants of Quilombolas, that these communities were certified by the Palmares Cultural Foundation. These communities are called **Cândido Mariano**, **Rio do Sul** and **Helvécia** in **Nova Viçosa municipality**; **Volta Miúda**, **Mutum** and **Naiá** in **Caravelas municipality**; **Vila Juazeiro** in **Ibirapuã municipality**; and **Mota** in **Itanhém municipality**. The communities of Mutum and Naiá have been swallowed up by eucalyptus monoculture plantation. This population fights incessantly to maintain what is left of its culture, like *bate barriga*, *samba de viola*, *capoeira*, *embarreio*, *reza de ofício*, the *terreiros*, typical dishes, traditional cassava flour-making, songs and historical monuments. Furthermore, only 5 communities have managed to open territorial demarcation processes before the National Colonization and Land Reform Institute (INCRA), ongoing for approximately 10 years. Almost all Quilombola communities in this territory live surrounded by eucalyptus, watched over by militias, and suffer on a daily basis the socio-environmental and cultural effects of the impactful and deregulated economic activities of agribusiness.

This Quilombola Letter, like the Public Hearing, results from the struggle of the region's Quilombola communities, which for years have demanded from public institutions respect for environmental licensing laws. These should protect communities' interests and rights, preventing the profound impacts that result from eucalyptus exploitation, which involves threats to the natural resources, land, memory and everyday activities of the remnants of Quilombolas.

Eucalyptus plantations were set up over the course of decades on the territory of traditional Quilombola communities, with nefarious effects that demonstrate the lack of the legal environmental licensing required by activities potentially leading to degradation, of adequate planning and management of environmental resources, of inspection actions, and of the mitigation and compensation of the impacts expected by economic ventures of this magnitude.

Eucalyptus monoculture is based on discriminatory environmental public policies that evince environmental racism, make invisible the demands of Quilombola communities of the Far South of Bahia and threaten their memories and rights.

It is worth underscoring the fact that political and business interests are opposed to Quilombola peoples and to their cultural heritage and identity as acquired rights. This is the case in all of Brazil's regions owing to disputes involving Quilombola communities' right to land, above all with regard to winning deeds to the land, since this makes it inalienable and collective.

The struggle of the Quilombola community of the Far South of Bahia is in everyone's interest – family farmers, subsistence farmers, workers, professionals of all stripes and, mainly, rulers that

should govern protecting life and the environment –, respecting Human Rights, our Constitution, environmental protection laws and the history of our country's traditional communities.

This is the reason why we are gathered here today. By means of the 1st Public Letter of the Quilombola Communities of the Far South of Bahia we wish to express our saga, our anguish and also to demand our rights, calling right now upon all of the Quilombolas in Bahia, as well as Brazilian society, to join us in this fight to change the nefarious reality by which the authorities are handling our history!

Below we present to private and public bodies, the latter from the three spheres of government, as well as to the Federal Public Prosecution Service (MPF), the Office of Public Defense of the Union (DPU) and Legislative Houses, the challenges facing the advance of the Quilombola struggle in the Far South of Bahia:

1. The timely publication of the Technical Identification and Delimitation Reports (RTIDs) of the territories of the Quilombola communities, where finalized;
2. Permanent dialogue and approximation with the other communities and social movements related to the issue of land occupation, use and legal entitlement in the Far South of Bahia;
3. Guaranteeing the safety of Quilombola communities in an integrated fashion, in a partnership between the Military, Civilian and Federal police forces, not just of corporations' assets;
4. Enlargement of the Quilombola Brazil Program serving the Quilombola communities in the Far South of Bahia;
5. That the Federal Public Prosecution Service, the State Public Prosecution Service and the Office of Public Defense of the Union act effectively in defense of the Quilombola communities in the Far South of Bahia to guarantee human rights and denounce violations of rights suffered by Quilombolas (subjects of law under ILO Convention 169) in international forums such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva (Switzerland);
6. Enlargement of School Programs in Quilombola Communities and Continuous Training for Quilombola Teachers;
7. Drilling of artesian wells in all the Quilombola communities of the territory;
8. Revitalization of the state rivers that bathe Quilombola communities in the territory, as well as the retreat of the eucalyptus to 500 meters from springs, lakes, natural lagoons, streams and rivers;
9. Limitation of eucalyptus planting to 20% of a micro-basin;
10. Banning of the spraying of poisons by aircraft in the territory;
11. Establishment of the Light for All program in every home of the Quilombola communities in the territory, with adequate spacing between the eucalyptus and the electricity distribution network;
12. Construction, repair and enlargement of local roads, with a compulsory recession for the eucalyptus along them;

13. Guarantee of Prior Consultation as per ILO Convention 169, which recognizes the right to consultation of Quilombola communities and territories;
14. That an Executive Operational Plan be formulated by the State Government of Bahia and municipalities with concrete targets for implementing sustainable development programs and projects in Quilombola communities and territories in the fields of culture, education, health, sanitation, housing and socio-productive inclusion;
15. Discussions and approximation with the representatives of indigenous organizations and their culture in the Far South of Bahia;
16. Creation of a multicultural working group for the collective advocacy and achievement of sustainable development in the territory;
17. Government measures to reduce the areas of expansion of eucalyptus, with a 5 km buffer for homes, historic buildings and sites of cultural value;
18. Implementation of the project for a Quilombola health unit in the territory of the Far South, in accordance with the health program for the black population of the Single Health System (SUS);
19. Establishment of a high school system connected via a transport network to Quilombola communities and with a Quilombola theme, as provided for by Law 10,639/2003 and the Bahia State Statute on Racial Equality and to Combat Religious Intolerance – Law 13,282/2014, chapter II;
20. Formulation and implementation of the sports program for Quilombola youth;
21. Digital inclusion for the Quilombola population of the communities in the Far South of Bahia;
22. Inclusion in the municipal budget of sustainable development programs and projects in Quilombola communities;
23. Creation of the Quilombola Women's Group in order to form the Productive Development Nucleus of Women from Quilombola Communities of the Far South;
24. Creation of schedules of meetings of the Territorial Council of Quilombola Communities of the Far South of Bahia and of the women's and youth groups;
25. Discussion and creation by the municipalities of the maintenance fund for the Quilombola struggles of the Quilombola Communities of the Far South of Bahia;
26. Transport for Quilombola students who go to college or technical schools in Teixeira de Freitas;
27. A quota for Quilombolas at the new military school in Teixeira de Freitas;
28. Creation of the Municipal Racial Equality Council in each municipality;
29. Creation of ethnic tourism in the Quilombola communities of Costa das Baleias, with training for tourist guides and financial incentives;

30. Creation of the cultural calendar of the Quilombola communities of the territory, with logistical and media resources made available;
31. Construction of Municipal Guidelines for Quilombola School Education in each municipality that has a Quilombola community in its territory;
32. Creation of a quota for Quilombolas in public hiring processes at state and municipal levels.

Hence, we the Quilombolas of the Far South of Bahia recognize that there is no more room or time to wait for these changes that are so fair and necessary in our region and state of Bahia, so that the land policy for Quilombolas can be effective. At present, all we have are conflicts designed to remove the Quilombolas from their ancestral land.

In sum, the Council of Communities of Remnants of Quilombolas in the Territory of the Far South of Bahia is in solidarity with all the Quilombolas of Brazil who resist in their communities, giving their lives to ensure the right to preserve their history and identity. We therefore reaffirm that Brazil will only become developed if all of them have access to the most important of all assets, Land.

Teixeira de Freitas, Bahia, March 29, 2022.

Rio do Sul Quilombola Association
Volta Miúda Quilombola Association
Vila Juazeiro Quilombola Association
Mota Quilombola Association
Helvécia Quilombola Association
Cândido Mariano Quilombola Association
Mutum Community of Remnants of Quilombolas
Naiá Community of Remnants of Quilombolas
Far South of Bahia Quilombola Cooperative