



PROVA DE SUFICIÊNCIA EM LÍNGUA INGLESA – 19-08-2017

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS BEING KILLED IN RECORD NUMBERS GLOBALLY, NEW RESEARCH REVEALS

Exclusive Activists, wildlife rangers and indigenous leaders are dying violently at the rate of about four a week, with a growing sense around the world that ‘anyone can kill environmental defenders without repercussions’. Last year was the most perilous ever for people defending their community’s land, natural resources or wildlife, with new research showing that environmental defenders are being killed every week across the world. Two hundred environmental activists, wildlife rangers and indigenous leaders trying to protect their land were killed in 2016, according to the watchdog group Global Witness – more than double the number killed five years ago.

John Knox, UN special rapporteur on human rights and the environment, said: “Human rights are being jettisoned as a culture of impunity is developing. There is now an overwhelming incentive to wreck the environment for economic reasons. The people most at risk are people who are already marginalised and excluded from politics and judicial redress, and are dependent on the environment. The countries do not respect the rule of law. Everywhere in the world, defenders are facing threats”.

What is driving the violence? The short answer is: industry. The most deadly industry to go up against was mining, with 33 deaths last year relating to anti-mining activities. Oil, agribusiness, hydroelectric dams and logging were also key drivers of violence, Global Witness found.

In May, farmers in Brazil’s Maranhão state attacked an indigenous settlement, hacking with machetes at the hands of their victims in another land conflict that left more than a dozen in hospital. There have also been killings of environmental defenders and attacks on others in Colombia, Honduras, Mexico and many other countries since the new year. Many of the killings recorded occurred in remote villages deep within mountain ranges and rainforests, with indigenous communities hardest hit. Many of the killers are reportedly hired by corporations or state forces. Very few are ever arrested or identified.

Around the world, the number and intensity of environmental conflicts is growing, say researchers. An EU-funded atlas of environmental conflict academics at 23 universities has identified more than 2,000, ranging over water, land, pollution, evictions and mining.

“These are just the reported cases. There could be three times as many. There is much more violence now,” said Cass business school researcher Bobby Banerjee who has studied resistance to global development projects for 15 years. The conflicts are happening worldwide now because of globalisation. Capitalism is violent and global corporations are looking to poor countries for access to land and resources. Poor countries are more corruptible and have weaker law enforcement. Companies and governments now work together to kill people,” he said.

The situation in Colombia in particular has gone from bad to worse in 2017. Brazil and the Philippines are also on course to hit new highs and indigenous groups continue to suffer disproportionately. In terms of country rankings, in 2016 Brazil was once again the deadliest country in absolute terms with 49 killings, many of them in the Amazon rainforest. Timber production was implicated in 16 of those cases as the country’s deforestation rate surged by 29%.

More broadly, Latin America remained the most dangerous region for anyone wanting to protect rivers, forests, mountains and oceans, accounting for 60 of the global total of killings of environmental defenders even though it is home to less than a tenth of the world’s population. Since the start of 2015, 132 land and environmental defenders have died in Brazil: the highest number on Earth. Many of the killings were of people trying to combat illegal logging in the Amazon. The Philippines comes second on the list, with 75 deaths in all. Honduras remains the most dangerous country to be a defender, with more killings per capita than anywhere else. With major economic interests at stake, state security forces were behind at least 43 killings globally – 33 by the police and 10 by the military – while private actors such as security guards and hitmen were responsible for 52 deaths.