



## **THE ECUMENICAL FORUM ACT BRAZIL – FE ACT BRASIL**

### **Letter of the political situation of Brazil**

To the partner organizations of the Brazilian ecumenical movement,

We want to share with you perspectives about our country's scenario, so that in a collective commitment, we can find alternatives to this outrageous and difficult time that we are facing due to the admissibility of the impeachment of the President of the Republic.

One cannot analyze the impeachment process of the elected President without taking into consideration some specific aspects of our context.

Since the year 2013, when street demonstrations happened in many Brazilian cities, we experienced a process of democratic destabilization. Initially, these demonstrations were the result of organized action of the student movement for free pass in the public transport system. However, gradually, some changes happened. New actors and actresses were joining and the mobilizations started to take strange characteristics and expressions, including hostility against political parties and organized social movements. Too often, people dressed in red were attacked, even when the red meant only an aesthetic preference and had nothing to do with a party or political orientation. Probably we have not understood very well these mobilizations. However, you cannot understand the current time without recalling 2013.

Hatred and political polarization that permeated the 2014 democratic elections persist until today.

Nowadays we have the most conservative National Congress since 1964 (year in which the country suffered a military coup that imposed an authoritarian regime that lasted for more than 20 years). Their faces have color, religion, sex and class: they are men, white, bourgeois and Christians. This requires of us the courage to deeply analyze the various



roles played by religious people and religious organizations in the public space. The Latin American ecumenical movement, throughout its history, takes the pursuit of justice motivated by faith and unity as mission.

In this confusing environment, lynching cases were not isolated neither was the desire to do justice with their own hands. That happened in the case of the black teenager beaten and enchained naked in the center of Rio de Janeiro in February 2014. Likewise compelling and disturbing as lynching cases are the religious intolerance cases in our country; especially against people of the African and Indigenous religious traditions, although Muslims and Gypsies are also affected by this intolerance.

Religious intolerance is racist and sexist. Also have a strong economic component and the denial of fair and equitable distribution of the Commons. This is because the annihilation of the indigenous religious tradition, for example, aims at ending of the worldview of these people and their meaning of the world. First, killing their gods and goddesses to, then, grab away their land. In the current form of our political representation, laws with biblical foundation are legitimized and Christian foundations are usurped to benefit certain churches and delegitimize other religious traditions.

In this context, the weakening of the feminist movement and the invisibility of their agenda of struggle for rights, the gradual attacks on the rights of women, the black youth extermination, the LGBTTfobia and many other forms of violence, are expressions of the deterioration of a civilization process.

We recognize that the government on trial has limits; many limits. Some examples are: the inefficient policy on Indigenous Peoples; the choice to construct dams, instead of investing in renewable energy; the non-audacious policy on land reform; the financial fiscal adjustment that generates unemployment, the non-democratic media regulation. Added to these examples is the non-implementation of the National Human Rights Plan 3 (PNDH3) attacked by conservative religious groups and the shy attempt to promote policies of real structural change, among many others.

Nevertheless, this was a democratically elected government. None of its weaknesses and none of its mistakes are arguments for impeachment. What is at stake, in fact, is the



regression of popular rights' advances accumulated in 30 years, translated into the Constitution and public policy.

The process of interruption of the democratic order will lead us on a fast way towards the neoliberal road that we know, recently, demolished countries in Europe. The impeachment of the Brazilian Republic's president symbolically represents the public lynching of a woman and also the breaking down with social policies that guaranteed, even minimally, the social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. In the past 13 years, the income of people in vulnerable situations had a real increase of 129%, discounting inflation. There was a significant reduction of extreme poverty in 13 years, from 35.2% to 21.4%. Last but not least, the increase by 53% of the minimum wage.

What lies ahead? A government program called "Bridge to the Future", that has as main herald the vice president Michel Temer. It is a program of government that aims to "create conditions for sustained growth of the Brazilian economy." Among other things, the program aims to execute a development policy focused on the private sector, through assets transfers, large concessions in all areas of logistics and infrastructure, partnerships to supplement the provision of public services and return to the previous regime of concessions in the oil area, offering to Petrobras the right of preference. The program holds a rigorous process of privatizing of public companies. In the area of labor, the document states that collective agreements must prevail over the legal norms of social protection to workers. In practical terms, this means a reform on labor legislation with the withdrawal of rights, such as 30 days paid vacation, Guarantee for Time of Service Fund (FGTS) and 13th salary.

From the announcements already made by the interim government of Michel Temer, we are greatly concerned with the restricting of human rights. The Ministries of Women, Racial Equality and Youth were extinguished. The composition of the new ministerial body, to date, indicates the absolute absence of women with all the chosen ministers being men and white. The Minister of Justice and Citizenship, Alexandre Moraes, was Public Security Secretary of Sao Paulo and lawyer of organized crime groups. He identifies social movements as terrorists.



It is important to note that a significant part of the interim government's members are accused of crimes of corruption. Vice president Michel Temer is one of them. The patronage of religion and politics tends to deepen. Michel Temer is close to other religious leaders who act in favor of a controversial agenda. That involves topics such as family, gender, sexual orientation, disarmament statute, decrease of minimum age for criminal responsibility, among others.

Finally, it is important to share that this process puts us face to face with the real Brazil: a country that never overcame its divisions of class, gender and race. Within our churches polarizations are present. Too often, conservative groups that reproduce hate speech to human rights agendas tend to have more voice and presence on institutional settings.

Like in earlier times, groups, organizations and individuals favorable to human rights are being marginalized. Our theologies are fragmented, focused on the academic production and relatively distant from day-to-day life. The theological production sometimes runs the risk of adding value to an ideological environment favorable to the criminalization of all social struggles and rights defenders.

Our condition of yeast in the mass and of proclaiming hope against all hopelessness continues. In this delicate context, it is essential that we take on the challenge and have the courage to witness an ecumenical practice focused on the resistance and reaffirmation of the struggle for justice. To do so, we must continue in articulations and networks, forums, fronts of national and international coalitions, capable of expanding and strengthening our agendas of struggle and affirmation of rights on overcoming adversity. The struggle for rights is quite different from the struggle for privileges and power. It is worthy, inclusive and affirmative of diversities.

Our times are times of exiles, cooperation, resistance and faith!

Our dreams pave our ground! And our sleeves are rolled up by prophecy.



### **Signed by the Coordination of FEACT Brazil**

Rev Cibele Kuss – Lutheran Foundation of Diaconia

Edoarda Scherer – Ecumenical Youth Network

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### **Organizações Brasileiras que integram o Fórum Ecumênico ACT-Brasil**

Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs do Brasil – CONIC

Conselho Latino-Americano de Igrejas – CLAI Brasil

Coordenadoria Eclesiástica de Serviço – CESE

Fundação Luterana de Diaconia – FLD

Koinonia – Presença Eclesiástica e Serviço

Comissão Eclesiástica dos Direitos da Terra – CEDITER

Centro Ecumênico de Serviço à Evangelização, Capacitação e Assessoria – CECA

Centro Ecumênico de Serviços à Evangelização e Educação Popular – CESEEP

Centro Ecumênico de Estudos Bíblicos – CEBI

Diaconia – Organização Social de Serviço

Universidade Popular – UNIPOP

Comissão Eclesiástica de Combate ao Racismo – CENACORA

Dia Mundial de Oração – DMO

Associação de Seminários Teológicos – ASTE

Programa de Formação e Educação Comunitária – PROFEC

Rede Eclesiástica da Juventude – REJU

Plataforma de Ação e Diálogo – PAD

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