

International Solidarity with Dom Vicente Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte

We are international organizations and social movements fighting for human rights, social justice and working for transformational change in society, to eliminate poverty, social inequalities and the destruction of nature. We are coming together to denounce the threats to the life of Dom Vicente Ferreira, auxiliary Bishop of Belo Horizonte (Brazil).

The rupture of the dam in Brumadinho in 2019, operated by multinational company Vale, killed 272 people and changed the lives of thousands of people in Brumadinho and in the Paraopeba basin forever. Since then, we have witnessed the work carried out by the team of the Episcopal Region *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*, of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, under the coordination of Bishop Vicente de Paula Ferreira. Bishop Vicente worked tirelessly to support the families of victims in their ongoing fight for full reparation and justice. We learned that on November 12th, due to his positions in defense of human rights and nature, unknown armed men recently intimidated Dom Vicente after the celebration of a mass.

In this same context, we are witnessing the dismantling of public policies, the flexibilization of protective legislation for the environment and for human rights defenders at the state and federal levels.

The cases of persecution and threats against human rights defenders in Brazil have increased significantly in recent years. We must not normalize this criminal practice that seeks to silence the voice of those who fight for the defense of life. Dom Vicente is one of many Bishops and church representatives facing an increasing number of threats for their social-environmental engagement. The current incident intimidating Dom Vicente shows the importance of protection for Human Rights defenders and international solidarity.

We express our solidarity and affirm our full support to the human rights activities carried out by Episcopal Region of *Nossa Senhora do Rosário*. We will remain united in the struggle for justice and integral reparation. We demand the Brazilian state to effectively protect human rights and environmental defenders and call on the competent authorities to investigate the perpetrators of the vile attack to Dom Vicente and to bring those behind the attack to justice as quickly as possible. We stand in solidarity with Dom Vicente and with all those putting their lives on the line to protect human rights and the planet.