

# PRESS RELEASE

## #OLYMPICDAY: GIVE CHILDREN IN RIO A REASON TO CELEBRATE

Geneva, 23 June – Today, the Olympic Day is celebrated in Lausanne, where the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has its headquarters. Naomi, a 12 year-old girl living in Vila Autódromo, Rio de Janeiro, has no reason to celebrate.

The community of Vila Autódromo was originally comprised of fisherman and lower-income people who settled alongside Lagoa de Jacarepaguá during the 1960's. Although for some 30 years the residents faced the constant threat of being removed, in the 1990's the government conceded them the right to use the land. Everything changed once Rio was awarded the 2016 Summer Olympics.

[‘The Fighter’](#) tells the story of Naomi's home in Vila Autódromo, where everything she loves is being ripped apart to make way for the Olympic Park. Naomi's wide eyes take in everything, from the cynical, illegal eviction efforts, to her community's refusal to go quietly. According to recent [reports](#), the police has used indiscriminate violence against protesters aiming to halt the removal of the remaining homes.

“It was frightening”, Naomi [says](#) of the protest. “I was scared they would come back during the night. They want to take the community by force.”

Naomy's struggle is too familiar to Brazilians and children from other places hosting Mega Sporting Events, such as South Africa. The University of Dundee and the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro documented children's rights violations around the Brazil World Cup in 2014. Based on children's views, [‘Let's win this game together’](#) contributes to the understanding the nature and extent of the impact that Mega Sporting Events have on children.

The researchers identified four key violations to children's rights:

- **Police (and army) violence** related to clearances of street children, occupation of low-income communities and protest repression was a critical issue in the pre-cup period.
- **Displacement** of children and families living in low-income neighbourhoods.
- **Sexual exploitation** was raised as an issue including sexual harassment of girls during occupation and displacement.
- **Child labour** and child neglect also emerged as a major problem during the event.

Not all children experienced the same level of rights violations. According to the research, poor children living in low-income neighbourhoods were more at risk of experiencing these rights violations. The primary data from interviews in the research indicates that girls face more risks in

terms of sexual exploitation and harassment, whereas boys are especially at risk of police violence. Statistical data from the national 'Dial 100' hotline suggests that the number of reported violations against children increased by 17% in the 12 host cities during the month of the 2014 World Cup compared to the same month in 2013 (National Secretariat for Human Rights of the Federal Government, 2014). And these are just the small number of cases that have reached the hotline.

"We felt fear. Entered tanks, many tanks, until today we have it here. They began putting soldiers in all exits of the favela, the soldiers heavily armed, it seemed like a war!"  
Young people's focus group in Rio de Janeiro

The research stated that leading sporting organizations, such as FIFA and the IOC, have a role and duty in preventing or mitigating human rights violations. It recommends changes in leading sports bodies' policy to include a focus on children's rights.

At the occasion of the Olympic Day, **Terre des Hommes** urges the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to:

- 1) act and take the interests of all families and children in Vila Autódromo into consideration by urging the Brazilian government to halt unlawful forced removals and make sure any displacement is consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including an assessment of child's best interests and the child's right to be heard.
- 2) ensure that a transparent assessment of the direct and indirect risks to children, in consultation with children and civil society, is included as part of the bidding process and host city contract, making sure children's rights are respected and monitored from development, hosting and final reporting and that complaints mechanisms are in place and accessible.
- 3) make sure future legacy plans are aligned with child rights benchmarks and recommendations from national, regional and international human rights bodies.

#### **Get involved:**

We agree with the [IOC](#) that the "Olympic Day is a great opportunity to look at the contribution of sport to global social issues that can affect your community". This starts by ending child rights abuses linked to the hosting of the Olympics. Help us make sure that the IOC is listening to children:

**Share Naomi's story on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) with the #OLYMPICDAY hashtag [promoted by the IOC](#) and give children in Vila Autódromo a reason to celebrate.**

**ENDS**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT**

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Terre des Hommes launched the *Children Win* campaign in February 2014 to ensure that leading sports bodies mitigate risks and enhance opportunities of Mega Sporting Events on children, both direct and indirect. Terre des Hommes has commissioned and collected – articles and videos – featuring views and opinions of children linked to Mega Sporting Events: FIFA World Cup™ 2010 in South Africa and FIFA World Cup™ 2014 and Olympic Rio 2016 in Brazil. We encourage leaders of the sport bodies, industry, business, media, and the broad public to meet these children on [www.childrenwin.org](http://www.childrenwin.org).

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Growing up on the Streets: <http://www.streetinvest.org/guots>

**Dr van Blerk** has previously researched and written about these issues including the displacement and street clearance of street children before the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. This paper can be accessed following this link:

[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03736245.2011.570515#.VX\\_eptJ0xaQ](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03736245.2011.570515#.VX_eptJ0xaQ)