

Dossier reveals human rights violations in the context of the Mega Sporting Events in the city of Rio de Janeiro

The Brazilian civil society 'World Cup and Olympics Popular Committee of Rio de Janeiro' launches today, the 8th of December 2015, the fourth volume of the Mega-Events and Human Rights Violations in Rio de Janeiro Dossier

Both the President of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, and Rio's mayor, Eduardo Paes, have entitled the 2016 Rio Olympics the "Games of Inclusion" and promised a legacy of tolerance, peace and social inclusion for the "Cidade Maravilhosa" ("Wonderful City"). The Dossier published today, however, reveals a different story:

Housing: Many poor communities have been violently removed to make space for large infrastructure projects connected to the Mega Sporting Events (Pan American Games, Football World Cup, Olympics). The government avoids giving figures, attributing the removals to other factors. The Popular Committee has made own research in the evicted communities and estimates that at least 4,120 families have already been evicted from their homes and 2,486 are still being threatened with removal for projects directly associated with the Mega Sporting Events.

The majority of evictions take place in areas where the real estate is very highly valued. From 2012 to 2015 the price of a square metre in the city of Rio de Janeiro has increased at an average of 29.4%. In areas like the favela Vidigal, this figure goes up to an incredible 481.0%.

The housing projects that are offered as an alternative to the inhabitants of eviction areas are mostly on the outskirts of Rio, sometimes up to 60 km from their original communities and with questionable infrastructure. Evicted communities are not informed on the projects planned in their areas and are given very low monetary compensation, ignoring local laws.

Public Transport: The administration of Rio de Janeiro has promised nothing less than a "Revolution of Public Transport" with new infrastructure. The Popular Committee shows that the large investments made in the transport system are very unequally distributed and only benefit a small part of the population. Beyond that, they focus on improving the transport within the rich parts of the city and even cutting some connections to poorer parts. Alongside investment from the public purse and despite last year's protests, fare prices are still rising. On the average, transport costs already make up almost 20% of Brazilians' living costs. This especially hits the poorer parts of the population: In the last six years the transport costs increased by a 30% for poorer families earning up to a 100 € (half a minimum wage), whereas the transport costs for families earning up to 1,570 € (eight minimum wages) dropped by more than 15%.

Working Conditions: The Dossier highlights repression measures by the city administration against informal street vendors, caused by the imposed marketing exclusivity of some companies. A serious case of human rights violations was reported by the police in one of the construction companies building the Olympic Village: 11 workers from different Brazilian states had to work in conditions similar to slavery.

Olympic Legacy: The Popular Committee takes a detailed look at some of the most prestigious projects like the reform of the Maracanã Stadium, the Aquatic Park Júlio Delamare or the Lagoa Rowing Stadium and draws a bitter conclusion: Many of the measures that were supposed to boost Brazilian sport actually destroyed training facilities for many local athletes and supported the gentrification of the city.

Environmental Protection: Since Rio applied for the Olympic Games, environmental measures have been propagated as an important element of its legacy for the local people. So far, the result is quite different: Guanabara Bay is still highly polluted and threatening the athletes' health. Despite the existence of an appropriate golf course, a new one has been built in a conservation area (mangroves and wet land). And for the construction of the Transolímpica roadway 200 km² of the Atlantic Forest (Mata Atlântica) have been destroyed, one of the currently most endangered Brazilian Ecosystems.

These measures have completely ignored existing Brazilian environmental laws, which is even more ironic as the same laws were used as a justification for the removal of whole communities and the violent eviction of their inhabitants.

Public Security: Rio de Janeiro has put a lot of effort into security measures, especially in the so-called "pacifications", which are military invasions and occupations of favelas especially those close to the sites of the sporting sites. These "security measures" have caused many deaths, police violence and other human rights violations especially against Afro-Brazilians during the operations and also in the "pacified" favelas.

The Dossier points out that close to the Mega Sporting Events in the city, killings of people by the police in supposed legitimate defense ("Autos de Resistência") as well as imprisonments increased significantly. Furthermore, it gives detailed descriptions of human rights violations in police and military interventions (e.g. in the Complexo do Alemão, Maré, Acari).

Children and Adolescents: There are basically four types of child rights violations that have occurred in the context of the Mega Sporting Events: violence by security forces (especially during the "pacifications"), evictions, sexual exploitation, and child labour. Although there are no statistics on the absolute number of cases reported, most occurred in the first two categories. The report by the Popular Committee gives a lot of examples: In order to "clean" the tourist sites, for instance, children and youth living in street situation were evicted. Some disappeared without their peers knowing where they went; others were brought to educational units (DEGASE) which are built for young offenders. Those who came back from these units reported violence and humiliation.

Also in the favelas a lot of cases of police violence occurred against youths, including homicides committed by the police masked as legitimate self-defence. During the FIFA World Cup the help line 'Disque Denúncia' registered 1,658 more calls on the violations of child rights than in the respective month of the year before, which registered 9,753 calls in total.

Gender: Women in Rio have organized themselves against the development of a city model which is elitist, exclusionary and reaffirms the privileges of a minority which is male, middle-aged, heterosexual and with economic and job stability.

Transparency and Budget: Through many examples, the report shows a lack of transparency in the procurement, spending and controlling of the large budget committed to infrastructure measures around the Mega Sporting Events in Rio. The Dossier names a handful of constructions companies that are present in almost all of the large infrastructure projects.

The Dossier closes with 16 points of civil society requests and their concrete demands, including the end of forced removals, harassment of street vendors and forced removals of street children, a return to the popular use of Maracanã stadium, the reforestation of the Environmental Protection Area of Marapendi, the release and acquittal of all political prisoners in connection with the 2013 protests prior to the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the demilitarization of the city, amongst others. In summary, the Popular Committee calls for the respect of the principles established in the Olympic Charter, such as “human dignity” and the “harmonious development of humankind”, and that the Olympic Games leave a positive legacy for all inhabitants.

Please read the full report **here** and support the Popular Committee in its effort to build a real “Cidade Maravilhosa” for all of its inhabitants.



Terre des Hommes has contributed to the Dossier with the chapter on ‘Children and Adolescents’, in collaboration with the University of Dundee, through the Children Win campaign (www.childrenwin.org) launched in 2014 to ensure that leading sport bodies mitigate risks and enhance opportunities of Mega Sporting Events on children, both direct and indirect.

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