



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations



Oral Statement

UN Human Rights Council

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Agenda Item 3: Clustered Interactive Dialogue

Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation

Extractive Industries and Brazil's Obligation to Respect and Protect the Human Right to Water

September 9, 2014

Franciscans International, VIVAT International, Serviço Inter-franciscano de Justiça, Paz e Ecologia (Sinfrajupe), Ação Franciscana de Ecologia e Solidariedade and the Movimento pelas Serras e Águas de Minas would like to thank Special Rapporteur de Albuquerque for her reports.

The typology report noted that “pollution and over-abstraction of water resources through industrial activities or dumping are among the most commonly identified threats to the realization of the human right to water and sanitation.” The Special Rapporteur reminds States that the licensing of industrial projects where human rights violations can be foreseen would run contrary to States’ obligations to respect the right to water.

Unfortunately, debates around the human right to water in Brazil have not properly addressed these dimensions of the State’s obligations. We reiterate our urgent concern that **overlapping concessions to extractive industries are taking place at the expense of key fresh water sources.**

The Serra do Gandarela region of Minas Gerais will soon be the last remaining water reserve to serve the people of the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte. Yet, there are intense economic interests in open-pit iron ore mining in this key ecological zone. The debate over Gandarela, like many other contested Brazilian territories, ought to be governed by human rights norms that prioritize the fulfilment of personal and domestic water needs for present and future generations.

We respectfully urge Brazil to implement the Special Rapporteur’s recommendations and especially to ensure that a human-rights framework is embedded in legislation, policy, and practice to prevent violations and that civil society organizations working on the right to water have access to all information and decision-making processes.

Finally, we join local and national civil society in urging the federal government to declare a National Park and Sustainable Development Reserve for the Serra do Gandarela—with limits that respond to the requirements of effectively guaranteeing the human right to water above the interests of mining companies.

Thank you, Mr./Mme. President.