



Poisoned in Maranhão

The violence suffered by traditional communities and their resistance in their waters, lands, crops, and livestock

CREDITS

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(Aerial application on cotton at the Planeste - Batavo,
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DATA ON RURAL CONFLICTS

In 2025, the state of Maranhão ranked first in the country in terms of reported rural conflicts, with **209 incidents** affecting nearly **60,000 families**.

- » **190** land conflicts
- » **8** water conflicts
- » **11** incidents of slave labor, resulting in the rescue of **135** workers

In recent years, the state has consistently ranked among the top four states with the highest rates of rural violence in Brazil, alongside Pará, Rondônia, and Bahia

Nearly **70%** of rural conflicts in Maranhão (**145**) are located in the state's transition zone between the Amazon and the Cerrado

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LAND OCCUPATION AND TENURE

Maranhão ranks **first in Brazil** for reported incidents of violence against land occupation and tenure, with **190 incidents**.

The state also ranks first in reported cases of **pesticide contamination (91)**.

The communities most frequently targeted are in the municipalities of **Brejo** (18 incidents), **Timbiras** (11), **Viana** (11), **São Benedito do Rio Preto** (10), and **Bacabal** (7).

The increased use of drones for aerial spraying contributes to the spread of contamination in traditional peasant communities.

- » **Farmers**, in 143 conflicts
- » **Business owners**, in 21 conflicts
- » **Governments**, in 10 conflicts

WATER USE AND CONSERVATION

- » Destruction and/or pollution
- » Pesticide contamination
- » Preventing families and communities from accessing water

FIRST HALF OF 2026

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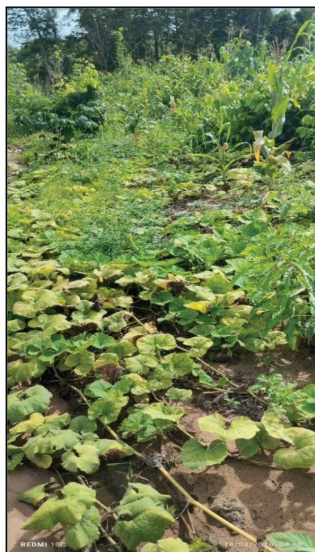
Indigenous peoples and traditional communities also suffer from intimidation, criminalization, death threats, and physical harm.





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Soybean field encroaching on smallholder farms. Credit: Ronilson Monteiro



Destruction of crops grown on smallholder farms following the spraying of pesticides (desiccants) on the soybean field. Credit: Maria Eunice da Conceição

WHAT THE COMMUNITIES DO



Small-scale farmer Conceição Ramos and her production. Pau Amarelo Community, Bem Feito Territory, municipality of Formosa da Serra Negra – MA. Credit: Raimundo Rodrigues



Small-scale banana cultivation. Pau Amarelo Community, Bem Feito Territory, Formosa da Serra Negra municipality – MA. Credit: Crédito: Raniere Roseira

WHAT AGRIBUSINESS DOES



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Aerial spraying of pesticides affected the Akroá Gamella indigenous people (Taquaritia Territory) in the municipality of Viana, Maranhão. Credit: Community records



A common practice in the state, “correntão” (big current) is one of the most brutal forms of deforestation. Credit: TV Quilombo

WHAT THE COMMUNITIES DO



A farming couple in the Boa Esperança Territory, Formosa da Serra Negra municipality – MA. Credit: Raniere Roseira



Buriti: Harvesting the native fruit and producing buriti oil. Boa Esperança Territory, municipality of Formosa da Serra Negra – MA. Credit: Raniere Roseira



Croplands affected by pesticide spraying in the traditional Curva community, municipality of São Mateus, MA. Credit: Community records



A rural worker from the Campestre territory with injuries caused by pesticide spraying. Credit: Timbiras Rural Workers' Union, MA

WHAT THE COMMUNITIES DO



Rice harvest. Boa Esperança Territory, municipality of Formosa da Serra Negra – MA.
Credit: José de Queiroz



Pig farming. Boa Esperança Territory, municipality of Formosa da Serra Negra – MA.
Credit: Raniere Roseira



Soybean field covering the smallholdings in Quilombo Guerreiro/Guerreiro Territory, municipality of Parnarama, MA. Credit: Ronilson Monteiro



Soybean field covering the smallholdings in Quilombo Mangueira/Guerreiro Quilombo Territory, municipality of Parnarama, MA. Credit: Antônia Sousa Santos

WHAT THE COMMUNITIES DO



Production of cassava flour. Boa Esperança Territory, municipality of Formosa da Serra Negra – MA. Credit: Raniere Roseira



Beijú production (traditional food made from cassava). Alegria Community, Campestre Territory, municipality of Timbiras – MA. Credit: Raniere Roseira



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Aerial spraying of pesticides by airplane. Credit: Local community archive



Pesticide contamination in a cassava plantation.

WHAT THE COMMUNITIES DO



Seed exchange. Boa Esperança Territory, municipality of Formosa da Serra Negra – MA
Credit: Raniere Roseira



Women working together in a collective effort to crack open babaçu coconuts.
Credit: Vitória Soares Dantas, from the Cocalinho Quilombola Territory – Parnarama – MA

In recent years, the state of Maranhão has ranked first in the country in terms of reported rural conflicts. The expansion of agribusiness through large-scale projects goes hand in hand with pesticide contamination, exacerbated by the increased use of drones for aerial spraying.

This contamination affects the land, water, air, and human bodies, poisoning families, communities, and traditional peasant territories.

But fire and poison cannot extinguish the resistance, the hunger, and the thirst for justice and dignity in rural areas.

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