

QUILOMBO OF ALL STRUGGLES: DO NOT BURY OUR RIGHTS!

"Learn to do good; seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17a)

"We will not allow any landfill to be established here. Only if they bury us together with it!"

(Leadership of the Menino Jesus Quilombola Community, Acará – Pará, Brazil)

Meeting in Assembly from June 10 to 12, 2026, the **Ecumenical Service Coordination (CESE)**, together with its member churches—namely the United Presbyterian Church, the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil, the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, and the Alliance of Baptists of Brazil—as well as partner ecumenical organizations, social movements, and human rights advocacy groups, publicly expresses its solidarity with the struggle and long-standing resistance of the **Menino Jesus Quilombola Community**, located in the municipality of Acará, within the Metropolitan Region of Belém, in the state of Pará.

The Menino Jesus Quilombo, currently home to approximately 30 families, received official certification from the Palmares Cultural Foundation in 2006. However, it has yet to obtain full legal title to its ancestral lands. The community survives and resists through traditional family-based practices, including the cultivation of Brazil nuts and açai, artisanal fishing, and family farming—activities that are essential to food security and food sovereignty. In addition, the community plays a vital role in environmental conservation, the protection of local biodiversity, and the intergenerational preservation of cultural heritage.

Yet this territory—rich in knowledge, traditions, and ways of life rooted in an ancestral relationship with the land, waters, and Amazon rainforest—is under serious threat due to a proposal to establish a sanitary landfill in the municipality of Acará. The facility is intended to receive waste from the Metropolitan Region of Belém and would directly impact approximately fifteen Quilombola communities.

This situation is further aggravated by the manner in which public authorities have conducted the implementation process. Significant shortcomings have been identified, particularly concerning the guarantee of effective free, prior, and informed consultation with the affected communities, as well as failures in ensuring their participation in decision-making spaces.

The installation of sanitary landfills near or within Quilombola territories generates numerous adverse impacts, including the destruction of water sources, agricultural areas, soil quality, and public health conditions. Beyond environmental risks, projects of this nature undermine cultural, spiritual, and productive practices that are intrinsically linked to the territory, thereby weakening traditional ways of life.

Environmental racism remains deeply embedded in this context, serving as yet another mechanism that reinforces inequalities within Brazilian society. This reality demonstrates how Quilombola communities continue to bear a disproportionate burden of socio-environmental harm while remaining largely invisible in the implementation of legal instruments and environmental policies, resulting in the violation of their territorial rights.

There can be no “standing forest” without peoples in movement. It is also important to highlight the profound inconsistency between the discourse and the actions of public authorities. In 2025, Brazil hosted the **30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30)** in Belém, Pará, a global forum dedicated to advancing commitments to socio-environmental and climate justice. Nevertheless, territorial conflicts persist, and Quilombola communities continue to face the historical denial of their territorial rights. There can be no genuine climate agenda without the protection of Indigenous Peoples, Quilombola communities, and other traditional peoples and communities.

Yet it is within this Quilombola and Amazonian territory—where “the rivers are their streets”—that we also witness hope and ancestral strength in the defense of rights. We see a strong intergenerational commitment to community

empowerment, particularly through the powerful leadership of Black women at the forefront of these struggles and demands. We also recognize the community mobilization that emerges from collective action and a conscious, engaged faith—one that values solidarity and networking as forms of territorial protection and, above all, as means of strengthening the central struggle: the right to land and territory free from threats.

NO TO THE SANITARY LANDFILL! NO TO THE DUMP!

At this moment, our commitment to the defense of life, socio-environmental justice, and the rights of traditional peoples and communities calls us to take a firm stand. We reiterate the urgent need for public authorities to investigate and address the irregularities already identified, including the absence of an adequate process of free, prior, and informed consultation with the Quilombola and traditional communities directly affected by the proposed project, as guaranteed under both national and international legal frameworks.

It is essential that the complaints and concerns raised by these communities be duly considered by the competent authorities, taking into account their territorial, cultural, and social specificities. We also call upon religious communities and all sectors of society to join efforts in this struggle for the defense of rights, territories, and the dignity of traditional peoples.

May the Divine **Ruah** continue to strengthen our faith, breathing upon us winds of courage and wisdom so that we may continue standing alongside the most vulnerable—yet always protagonists of their own struggles—thus fulfilling our commitment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

53rd Ordinary General Assembly of the Ecumenical Service Coordination (CESE)

Belém, Pará, Brazil, June 12, 2026