



Pesticide newsletter

Nº3 - May 2021

Civil Society Activities



Brazil: Our Brazilian Board member Larissa Mies Bombardi victim of intimidation attempts

Since Jair Bolsonaro's accession to the Brazilian presidency in January 2019, [threats](#) against academics, national administrators, and environmental advocates have been growing. Their scientific work and their positions on government policies are subject to virulent criticism and they are increasingly victims of intimidation attempts: anonymous insulting letters, death threats, intrusions into private homes, kidnapping attempts, etc... There is no shortage of examples in this regard and they testify to the poisonous atmosphere that surrounds environmentalists today.

Larissa Mies Bombardi, a professor-researcher and geographer at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil and a member of the board of Justice Pesticides, has been subjected to this widespread attempt to gag critics since the publication of her [atlas](#) of pesticide contamination in Brazil and its public presentation in Berlin at the invitation of the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental

Responsibility (ENSSER) in May 2019. Her study shows that one person dies from agricultural chemical poisoning every two and a half days in Brazil. It also alerts on the health of the youngest whose fate is deeply affected by the proliferation in the environment of these toxic substances. It estimates that the reported cases of poisoning of babies in rural areas represent only one-fiftieth of the actual poisonings, which means that 17,000 babies, between 0 and 12 months, were poisoned between 2007 and 2014 and not 343, according to health authorities.

The report highlights the responsibility of the intensive monoculture system implemented in Brazil in this widespread contamination. Soya, corn and sugar cane are the crops that use the most chemical inputs. They are also mostly exported to countries such as the United States, Switzerland and Germany. The toxic products used for these crops, a large part of which is banned in the European Union, thus return in the form of residues in agri-food products, feeding what she calls "the circle of poison". Larissa Bombardi does not only address the spraying of toxic substances, but also questions the consequences of the economic relationship between Brazil and Western countries.

The report by Larissa Mies Bombardi has provoked the anger of the agribusiness sector, which is close to the Bolsonaro government. In the months following the presentation of her atlas, the Brazilian researcher was subjected to numerous pressures and intimidations, which made the exercise of her research particularly difficult and seriously affected her family life, to the point that she decided to leave her country to continue her research in Belgium.

ENSSER, like many South American groups did, has written an [open letter](#) in support of Larissa Mies Bombardi, sent to her university and to the Brazilian Academy of Sciences and published it on its website. Justice Pesticides thanks ENSSER warmly and stands in solidarity with it.

Larissa Bombardi's example is far from unique. Many academics, employees of national environmental protection agencies, and environmentalists are regularly attacked. Researchers around the world should mobilize to prevent scientific research from being subjected to political interests.

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