

## **The World Bank's land program in the State of Piauí, Brazil, is a license for land grabbing**

### **International Statement**

The World Bank is financing a land titling, or “regularization” program in the Brazilian State of Piauí, where large areas of land have been grabbed from local communities and illegally occupied by agribusiness. Local communities, including communities of descendants of runaway slaves (*quilombolas*) as well as indigenous peoples, are being violently displaced from their traditional lands and face contamination of water and soils, increasing violence against community leaders, deforestation and loss of biodiversity.

The escalation of land grabbing in Piauí and the northeastern part of the Brazilian *Cerrado* is directly related to the inflow of hundreds of millions of dollars from foreign pension funds, university endowments and other financial companies that are acquiring farmlands by way of Brazilian intermediaries. Internal documents show that the World Bank is aware of the extent of land grabbing in the area.

Through a 120 million USD loan, the World Bank thus supports a land titling program that risks sanctifying these land grabs and paving the way for a new rush of 'legalized' land grabbing, with more catastrophic social and environmental consequences.

As the World Bank hosts its annual Land and Poverty Conference in Washington D.C., from 19-23 March 2018, Brazilian social organizations and their international partners and supporters are calling for the Bank to suspend its support for the land titling program in Piauí and to respond to the demands of affected communities.

The World Bank project contains no concrete safeguards to ensure that it actually secures people's tenure rights against dispossession by local agribusiness and speculators, and to guarantee that it does not formalize the dispossession of communities in the context described above. As such, the project does not close the gaps of the state of Piauí's law on land regularization and is not in line with the *UN Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests* (Tenure Guidelines).

The Brazilian Public Prosecutor's Office intervened on December 18, 2017 by issuing a formal recommendation to the World Bank to suspend the land program and to adopt measures to remedy the violations of the land rights of traditional peoples and communities that have already occurred.<sup>1</sup> The World Bank has yet to respond.

We call upon the World Bank to

- ❖ Comply with the recommendations contained in the Brazilian Public Prosecutor's Office's letter by immediately suspending the project “Piauí: Pillars of Growth and Social Inclusion” and the land regularization/titling process in Piauí.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications\\_2017/Letters\\_and\\_statements/Recomendacao\\_MPF.pdf](http://www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications_2017/Letters_and_statements/Recomendacao_MPF.pdf).

- ❖ Respond to the demand of affected communities – which is supported by the Public Prosecutor’s Office – to establish a dialogue round table with the objective of assessing the effects of the World Bank-financed land regularization program in Piauí, in order to prevent and remedy violations and to put in place mechanisms, which guarantee local communities control over their territories as well as effective remedies, including the restitution of community lands. The round table should involve representatives of the affected communities, the agrarian court of the state judiciary (Vara Agrária da Justiça Estadual), the Land Institute of Piauí (Instituto de Terras do Piauí, INTERPI), the state and federal offices of the Public Prosecutor, the State Parliament of Piauí, FAO and support groups from civil society. This dialogue round table should be convened by FAO as the leading UN agency for the implementation of the *Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests*.
- ❖ To publicly disclose how the land titling/regularization project in Piauí and any other loans, projects and operations the World Bank is involved with, are in compliance with the *Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests*.

This statement is endorsed by the following organizations and networks:

Ação Acadêmica para o Desenvolvimento das Comunidades Rurais, Moçambique

ActionAid Brazil

ActionAid USA

Amazon Watch

Articulação Nacional das Pescadoras, Brazil

Articulação Piauiense dos Povos Impactados pelo MATOPIBA, Brazil

Associação dos Advogados dos Trabalhadores Rurais, Brazil

Associação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil

Campanha Nacional em Defesa do Cerrado, Brazil

Caritas Piauí, Brazil

Centro de agricultura alternativa do Norte de Minas Gerais, Brazil

Centro Internazionale Crocevia, Italy

Coletivo das Comunidades de Fundo e Fecho de Pasto, Brazil

Comissão de Povos Originários Populações e Comunidades Tradicionais do Fama 2018, Brazil

Comissão Nacional de Fortalecimento de Reservas Extrativistas e dos Povos Extrativistas Costeiros e Marinheiros, Brazil

Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), Brazil

Community Alliance for Global Justice, USA

Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Cimi), Brazil

Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores, Brazil

Coordenação Nacional da Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas, Brazil

Development and Peace - Caritas Canada

Eco Ruralis, Romania

Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria

Family Farm Defenders, USA

Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional (FASE), Brazil

FIAN Belgium

FIAN BRASIL

FIAN Germany

FIAN International

FIAN Sweden

Focus on the Global South

Friends of the Earth US

Global Exchange, USA

GRAIN

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, USA

Grassroots International, USA

HEKS/EPER, Switzerland

Housing and Land Rights Network – Habitat International Coalition

Inclusive Development International, USA

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, USA

Instituto Mais Democracia, Brazil

Instituto Sociedade Proteção e Natureza, Brazil

International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), USA

Just Foreign Policy, USA

La Via Campesina

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, USA

Masifundise, South Africa

Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), Brazil

Movimento Interegional das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu, Brazil

Movimento Trabalhadores Camponeses, Brazil

Movimentos dos Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais, Brazil

National Family Farm Coalition, USA

Observatório das Nacionalidades, Brazil

Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations, Presbyterian Church, USA

Rede Pantaneira, Brazil

Rede Social de Justiça e Direitos Humanos, Brazil

Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food

Solidarity Sweden - Latin America (SAL)

Terra Nuova, Italy

Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UECE), Brazil

US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA)

WhyHunger, USA

World Forum of Fisher Peoples