

## OPEN LETTER

✧ IM-DEFENSORAS CONDEMNS EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION OF MARIELLE FRANCO IN BRASIL

✧ WE DEMAND ELUCIDATION OF ALL MATERIAL AND INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES  
ENTAILED IN THE CRIME

*Mesoamerica, March 21, 2018* – The more than a thousand women human rights defenders in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua who make up the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras) express our repudiation and most emphatic condemnation of the **extrajudicial execution** of Marielle Franco --feminist, defender of LGBTI rights and the rights of Afrodescendant peoples in Brazil-- and of the murder of her chauffer, Anderson Gomes.

On Wednesday, March 14th, Marielle Franco was shot to death as she was riding in a car through downtown Rio de Janeiro; the driver of the car was also killed. Numerous indications suggest that the attack was pre-planned. According to forensic investigations conducted by the Civil Police of Rio de Janeiro, the 9mm caliber bullets had been acquired in 2006 by the Federal Police, which supports the hypothesis that this was a crime involving agents of the State.

Marielle Franco, a woman of African descent, feminist and lesbian with a long, widely recognized history in the defense of human rights, was working against the genocide of people of African descent in Brazil. She was a member of the Tripartite Commission monitoring federal military intervention in the public security system of Rio de Janeiro, decreed on February 16, 2018, and she had publicly criticized this measure. Four days before her assassination, she had denounced the brutal action and ongoing abuses by Battalion 41 of the Military Police in the Acari community, in which two Black youth were killed.

In the current context of violence, closure of democratic spaces and authoritarianism experienced in Brazil and on the Latin American continent in general, this crime highlights the situation of extreme vulnerability faced by women human rights defenders. Such a situation requires coordinated, hard-hitting actions to demand compliance by regional governments with all the different recommendations and commitments made at the IACHR and the UN on combatting violence against women and guaranteeing their political participation and their right to defend rights. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Belem do Para Convention, and the UN Resolution on the protection of women human rights defenders and persons who defend the rights of women.

We are outraged by the smear campaign carried out in social networks and different traditional news media regarding the moral character, personal life, commitment and vital labor performed by Marielle. We are especially concerned that some of the defamatory comments have been expressed by government functionaries, such as the Judge of the Court of Law in Rio de Janeiro, Marília Castro Neves.

Given this situation, we of IM-Defensoras:

- Demand that the Brazilian government carry out a thorough, impartial investigation of the murder, focused on its political nature, which elucidates all material and intellectual responsibilities entailed in the crime.
- Insist that the government of Brazil guarantee immediate protection to the survivors and all witnesses to the crime, with the aim of impeding any kind of intimidation or threat.



**INICIATIVA MESOAMERICANA  
de Mujeres Defensoras  
DE DERECHOS HUMANOS**

- Exhort the Brazilian government to hold all persons accountable who are propagating hate speech, or who are reproducing or creating false news that damage the reputation and dignity of Marielle Franco and persons close to her.
- Demand that official human rights entities of the UN and the OAS avail themselves of all measures in their hands to pressure the government of Brazil to comply with its commitments to guarantee the right of women to political participation and the defense of human rights in conditions of liberty and security.
- Stand in solidarity with the family and persons close to Anderson Gomes, the driver of the car in which Marielle Franco was riding, and demand that justice be done for his murder.
- Call on the international community to express its repudiation of this assassination and to join in the campaign to pressure the Brazilian government to comply with its obligations.

**#MarielleFrancoPresent  
#JusticeForMarielle**



RED NACIONAL de  
DEFENSORAS de  
DERECHOS HUMANOS  
en MÉXICO

