

# **RELIGIOUS RACISM IN BRAZIL**

**A Report on Intolerance Against Afro-  
Brazilian Religions**



**Report by Dr. Danielle N. Boaz**

**Introduction and Portuguese Translation by Dr. Gustavo Melo Cerqueira,  
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**International Commission to Combat Religious Racism**

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

I have prepared this report in my capacity as the inaugural chair of the International Commission to Combat Religious Racism and as a scholar of African and African Diaspora Religious Freedom. I am grateful to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte for a Faculty Research Grant and the Chancellor's Diversity Challenge Fund, which have provided me with the means to travel to Brazil to conduct research and to meet with activists, government officials, and scholars. I am also grateful to the Global Religion Research Initiative and the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research for funding for the translation of this report and other materials. Many thanks to Iyalorixá Rosiane Rodrigues, Dr. Ana Paula Miranda, and other researchers of the Núcleo de Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão de Administração Institucional de Conflitos at the Universidade Federal Fluminense for sharing some of the information that they have compiled about religious intolerance in Brazil, particularly their research regarding the murder of Afro-Brazilian priests.

I would like to stress that although I have drafted this report, I am not the foremost expert on intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions. There are multiple Brazilian scholars who have written extensively about religious racism and numerous activists who are able to speak about this problem from lived experience. However, my fluency in English and my position as a scholar provide me with the privilege of having both the time and means to devote to this report. This report is intended to provide an overview of religious racism in Brazil for the English-speaking public and to lay the foundations for additional research on this growing threat.

The ICCRR plans to expand the Religious Racism database with additional cases from Brazil and other parts of the world. We will do this through joint projects with activists and researchers in the countries most affected by rising intolerance. If you would like to support our research, please contact us at [religoustracism@gmail.com](mailto:religoustracism@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

*Danielle N. Boaz*

**Danielle N. Boaz, J.D., LL.M. Ph.D.**  
Chair, International Commission  
to Combat Religious Racism

# INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT AND DATABASE ON RELIGIOUS RACISM IN BRAZIL

By Dr. Gustavo Melo Cerqueira, Babalorixá of Ilê Axé Omi Ogun siwajú

Brazilian composer Tom Jobim (1927-1994) is credited with saying that Brazil is not for beginners. I remember hearing this phrase for the first time in the course, “Theory and Political Issues of the African Diaspora,” in which I worked as a Teaching Assistant, probably in 2013. The course was created and supported by the consortium formed, at the time, by the NGO Criola, PROAFRO - Programa de Estudos e Debates dos Povos Africanos e Afro-americanos do Centro de Ciências Sociais e da Faculdade de Serviço Social Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, LLILAS - Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies and the African and African Diaspora Studies Department, the latter ones linked to the University of Texas at Austin, United States. The course was taught by several professors, including Amílcar Pereira. One of Pereira's class sessions was about the formation of the Unified Black Movement in Brazil, and the phrase was mentioned to indicate that understanding race relations in that country requires dedication to comprehend the immeasurable complexity of the dynamics of Brazilian - style racism. Without this, some of what we have to say in this report may appear anachronistic, sometimes contradictory, and even fallacious.

Therefore, to whoever reads this Report, as well as whoever comes to consult the data contained in the Database on which it is based, the situation of terror and constant threat to our existence as practitioners of Candomblé may seem implausible when, at the same time, it is seen on TV that, in the carnival of Rio de Janeiro, Acadêmicos do Grande Rio won the samba school contest with a plot in honor to Exu- precisely the orixá that is most frequently regarded as the devil by the religions that demonize Candomblé.<sup>1</sup> Reinforcement: if the orixás are seen by Christian fundamentalists as expressions of the devil in the religious environment of the Southern Hemisphere, features present in some depictions of Exu such as horns (rare representations of Exu, at least in Candomblé) and, a large and erect phallus, are referenced as proof of that demonic connection. Moreover, in the case of Brazil, where hypersexuality is marketed as a tourist product - perhaps less than has happened in the past, but it still happens - and considering how hypersexuality is, also in Brazil, so frankly associated with Black people, and even more with Black women, and considering that carnival is, perhaps more in Brazil than anywhere else in the world, the festival of flesh, attracting tourists from the most varied parts of the world, perhaps due to the possibilities of sexual intercourse that are advertised as more permeable and acceptable in this country from which I write, having Exu as the theme of the great champion of Carnival is perhaps a somewhat comfortable place, since it does not escape the “natural place” of Blacks (borrowing here the way in which Lélia Gonzalez (1935-1994) brings an Aristotelian concept to critically analyze of the positions in which Brazilian society both expects and admits - and perhaps even desires - the Black presence, such as favelas, prisons and, why not say so, in carnival celebrations).<sup>2</sup>

At the same time that Exu is in a somewhat predictable place as a carnival theme - if we are to consider other times when orixás were present in carnival tributes, not only in the carnival of Rio de Janeiro, but in other major cities (in addition to the presence of the orixás in Brazilian popular music, not always specifically related to carnival) - it is important to consider that the dispute in the symbolic field is complicated, but it is a field in which, at least from time to time, or at least from place to place, we have maintained some consistency and, occasionally, prevalence. It is necessary

1. <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/carnaval/2022/noticia/2022/04/26/fala-majete-sete-chaves-de-exu-entenda-o-enredo-da-grande-rio-campea-do-carnaval-do-rj.ghtml>

2. Lélia Gonzalez, “Racismo e Sexismo Na Cultura Brasileira,” *Revista Ciências Sociais Hoje* (1984): 232.

that we pay attention, however, to the extent to which the spaces of power, understood here as institutional decision-making spaces, are increasingly being filled by Evangelicals. And here, I think that an interesting polarity is already being pointed out, because, even though sometimes with the support of the state and sometimes even confronting it, the power of Candomblé still seems precarious compared to the possibilities of power building and structuring that the Evangelical presence in state power seems to be achieving. I hope that in the development of this text, the reader understands why this is an important reflection, especially considering that some of the occupants of state power today are far from adopting a secular and respectful stance towards cultural diversity in Brazil.

If we think, for example, of state/institutional power at the federal level, we have the so-called *Bancada Evangélica* [Evangelical Bench], sometimes also referred to as the *Bancada da Bíblia* [Bible Bench], composed of eighty-four deputados federais (representatives of the states in the *Câmara dos Deputados*) and seven senators. Larger than the bench itself is the so-called *Frente Parlamentar Evangélica* [Evangelical Parliamentary Front], which is composed of two hundred and one deputados federais and eight senators, according to 2019 data.<sup>3</sup> Part of this group intersects with the *Bancada Armamentista* {Arms Bench], also known as *Bancada da Bala* (Bullet Bench], which also has a conservative agenda, in addition to being an institutionalized arm of the gun lobby. These two benches also intersect with the *Bancada Ruralista* [Ruralist Bench] also known as *Bancada do Boi* [Bull Bench], where the defense of agro-business is one of the main mottos. Such is the affinity among these three benches that, since 2015, they are commonly referred to as the *BBB Bench* (Bíblia, Bala and Boi).<sup>4</sup>

In the present context, the *BBB Bench* is joined by the opportunist center-right wing political parties, which always side with the groups that assume power, whether a government more to the left or more to the right. There are no innocents in this game. In the present, before an acephalous government that derives part of its popular support from an “agenda de costumes,” that is, focused on the defense of the bourgeois cis-heteronormative family and increasingly blatantly averse to identity politics (considering here gender, race, sexuality, and class as the predominant ones), the center-right thickens a discourse of strong fascist inclination supported by the previously mentioned benches.

In this context, if violence against Afro-Brazilian religions was already increasing, even in a left-wing government such as those from 2003 to 2016, it is around the year of the 2016 coup and in the following years, that cases start to worsen considerably. If not by quantity, certainly by gravity.

In 2015, *terreiros* were set on fire around Brasília, in the Federal District, capital of the Brazilian Republic (see page 13). Also in 2015, *babalorixás* were killed in Belém region of the state of Pará, in a short period of time (see page 19). In 2017, drug traffickers in Rio de Janeiro expelled leaders of Candomblé and Umbanda *terreiros* from their homes, in a phenomenon that had already been registered in previous years, but that has worsened profoundly since then (see pages 7-9). In the following years, fires, depredations and shootings, among other forms of aggression, became a constant, not to mention the online harassment, threats and incitement to violence.

3. <https://www.camara.leg.br/internet/deputado/frenteDetalhe.asp?id=54010>

4. <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/acervo/noticias/bancada-bbb-domina-o-congresso>.

Wait. Is this the same country that had Exu as the winning theme of a carnival televised by one of the biggest TV stations in the world? Yeah. Remember the warning: Brazil is not for beginners.

Returning to religious racism in Brazil, more than the facts of spectacular violence, I am concerned about how much the notorious escalation of the conservative and anti-democratic agenda is directly related to the increase in cases of religious racism. I am concerned about the way in which representatives of Evangelical sects are increasingly occupying different spheres of power: from the governors, as was the case of Anthony Garotinho, in Rio de Janeiro, to mayors such as, also in Rio de Janeiro, Marcelo Crivella (nephew of the founder the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Edir Macedo), who was a senator between 2002 and 2017 and Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture from 2012 to 2014, in the first term of the former -President Dilma Rousseff. As mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Crivella was one of the main opponents of the carnival of the samba schools, for reasons that were never very clear to the population besides the apparent disdain that he had for account of the challenge to the "agenda de costumes" (an agenda dear to Evangelical politicians) that is at the heart of carnival parties. Still talking about executive power at the municipal level, it is important to note the publication of three decrees, in 2017, in three municipalities from different regions of the country, that those cities belonged to Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, in 2018, in the city of Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro, the mayor installed a sign at one of the entrances to the municipality that says that that city belongs to Jesus, in clear disrespect for the secularity of the Brazilian state, established in our Federal Constitution (see page 25). The similarity and timely proximity of those actions suggest that they were part of an orchestrated act. It is far from a mere coincidence.

Still speaking about the Evangelical presence in the institutional power, President Jair Bolsonaro recently fulfilled a promise that he had made in 2019, that he would appoint two jurists to the Federal Supreme Court, and one of them would be "terribly Evangelical."<sup>6</sup> Only two years passed between Bolsonaro's promise and the day he appointed André Mendonça, a jurist and Evangelical pastor who had been Minister of Justice in the Bolsonaro government since 2020, to which he was appointed after the departure of Sérgio Moro, who left the government accusing President Bolsonaro of interfering in the Federal Police.<sup>7</sup> For those who don't know or don't remember, Moro was one of the most prominent judges of Operação Lava-Jato (Car Wash Operation), which supposedly would end corruption in Brazil, having focused a good part of his efforts to dismantle a purported corruption scheme allegedly led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who was president of Brazil from 2003 to 2011. Moro was also one of those responsible for leaking an audio recording of a wiretapping made in the office of the then-President of the Republic, Dilma Rousseff, which undermined the environment for her to appoint former President Lula to the post of Minister of Justice in her government, allegedly in a maneuver to free him from the imminent arrest that would be ordered by the then judge Sergio Moro,<sup>8</sup> who in fact did so, arresting Lula in 2018. But even with Lula in prison, given the possibility that a candidate from the PT - Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party), the same party as Lula, was elected president of the republic in 2018 Moro leaked audios of deposition testimonies made by Antônio Palocci (former minister of economy and former minister chief of staff in the PT governments) that attributes acts of corruption to Lula. This deposition

5. <https://www.metro1.com.br/noticias/cidade/28103.em-decreto-oficial-prefeito-de-guanambi-entrega-cidade-a-deus>;

<https://www.conjur.com.br/2017-jan-03/prefeitos-decretam-cidades-mt-ba-pertencem-deus>

6. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/07/10/bolsonaro-diz-que-vai-indicar-ministra-terrivel-evangelico-para-o-stf.ghtml>.

7. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2020/04/24/moro-anuncia-demissao-do-ministerio-da-justica-e-deixa-o-governo-bolsonaro.ghtml>

8. [https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2016/03/17/politica/1458179601\\_208300.html](https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2016/03/17/politica/1458179601_208300.html)

was fully annulled in 2020 by the Federal Supreme Court,<sup>9</sup> and the Federal Police itself declared that Palocin's statement was not supported by other evidence collected during the investigations.<sup>10</sup> However, in 2018, the leak of these audios seems to have created a major obstacle to the growth of the PT's candidacy for the presidency, favoring the election of the then-candidate Jair Bolsonaro. Also in 2018, Moro entered into negotiations with Bolsonaro and later became his Minister of Justice, having later left office amidst an exchange of accusations with Bolsonaro. In 2021, the Federal Supreme Court concluded that Moro was biased in condemning Lula to prison.<sup>11</sup> Moro's partiality was also evident in other decisions issued within the scope of Operação Lava-Jato. The processes were annulled, Lula was released and is now the main hope of stopping the reelection of the catastrophe Bolsonaro.

With the retirement of a minister of the Supreme Court, Bolsonaro decided to put his plan into action and found in André Mendonça, an Evangelical pastor, lawyer and, until then, Minister of Justice, a possibility of having a “terribly Evangelical” judge in the Supreme Court. The hearing of Mendonça took more than four months to be scheduled and, only after that, Mendonça could finally assume the position of Minister of the Federal Supreme Court.<sup>12</sup> The hearing (“sabatina”) to which I refer is standard procedure so that a person appointed by the President of the Republic can effectively be confirmed to the post of judge of the Supreme Court. This procedure serves to verify the notable legal knowledge and unblemished reputation as defined by the Federal Constitution in its article 101, although the main criterion publicly manifested by Bolsonaro to appoint Mendonça was the fact that he was an Evangelical. The “sabatina” also serves to ascertain the position of the nominee in relation to controversial issues and/or issues considered relevant to the nation.

When the hearing finally ended and the Senate voted to approve the nomination of Mendonça to assume the position of judge of the Supreme Court, the lawyer and pastor went to celebrate with his family and allies and that of President Bolsonaro. The First Lady was in the room to congratulate Mendonça, and she seems to have been taken by the Holy Spirit, moving those who were present. Mendonça himself was in the room watching the announcement of approval of the nomination. The First Lady jumped up, spoke in tongues, and cried. In a video, Mendonça says “Glory to God,” celebrating in an emotional way, while Evangelicals are praying around him.<sup>13</sup>

If the victory of the plot about Exu in the carnival of Rio de Janeiro is evidence of how much popular forces continue to organize and react to the different forms of oppression and violence, including the violence perpetrated by the state, the nomination of a “terribly Evangelical” pastor for a seat in the highest court in the country heralds particularly dark times for the terreiro communities of our country. In this sense, while we are celebrating the victory of the plot about Exu at Carnival - which I am not denying has a symbolic effect that may translate into some material advance - a “terribly Evangelical” pastor occupies the Supreme Court. In a country like ours, an apparent contradiction like this seems to coexist as if the two facts had the same political weight or, worse, as if the victory of the plot about

9. <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/stf-exclui-delacao-de-palocci-de-acao-contra-lula-na-lava-jato/>

10. <https://oglobo.globo.com/politica/pf-conclui-que-delacao-de-palocci-nao-tem-provas-sobre-lula-btg-1-24591136>

11. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2021/06/23/plenario-do-stf-reconhece-decisao-da-segunda-turma-que-declarou-moro-parcial-ao-condenar-lula.ghtml>

12. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2021/12/01/ccj-do-senado-abre-a-sabatina-de-andre-mendonca.ghtml>

13. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n65NXbAEGfQ>

Exu in the 2022 off-season carnival was able to redeem us from the potential violence caused by a pastor who has been appointed and admitted to the Supreme Court precisely for being, allegedly, "terribly Evangelical."

It is important that we are aware of the risk of redemption narratives. In other words, let's be careful that the victories that we are conquering in the symbolic field do not cloud our thinking about the need for conquests also - and, perhaps, above all - in the material field. I'm not saying we're not conquering them. But I doubt that we are achieving them at the rate we need to ensure our full existence.

It seems to me that the occupation of positions of power by "terribly Evangelical" people indicates that the "terribly violent" times to which we have always been subjected have a great chance of not only continuing, but of being intensified.

It is worth saying that I am not here to demonize or to vilify all Evangelical associations, much less do I want to implicate all Evangelical people in acts of religious racism. However, there are signs of illegalities that can not be overlooked and that seem to be linked to a network of influence and favors whose criteria seem to be religious.

A recent example of what I say above is happening precisely at this time when I finish writing this text. The federal government is under scrutiny because of an apparent network of favoring politicians linked to three Evangelical pastors who influenced the distribution of resources from the Ministry of Education to some municipalities.<sup>14</sup> Such denunciations led to the removal of the then-Minister of Education, Evangelical pastor Milton Ribeiro. Telephone wiretaps made by the Federal Police and leaked to the press suggest that Ribeiro favored these pastors at the request of the President of the Republic himself.<sup>15</sup> The case is still under investigation, but opposition parliamentarians have already filed a request for the opening of a CPI - Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry] in the Senate, in parallel with the investigation by the Federal Police, to ascertain more facts and evidence related to the allegations.

Attention is also drawn to the increase in the sending of municipal, state, and federal public resources to the so-called "comunidades terapêuticas," (literally "therapeutic communities," similar to some rehabilitation facilities) many of them operating under the – albeit unofficial – command of Evangelical pastors. A report made by a Rede Globo TV show on June 19, 2022 demonstrates the strength and influence of Evangelical churches in the therapeutic communities that have received the greatest resources.<sup>16</sup> Primarily focused on the recovery from chemical dependency, the methods applied by some of these communities directly violate human rights, with explicit manifestations of homophobia and the

14. <https://www.correibraziliense.com.br/politica/2022/06/5018650-escandalo-do-mec-delegado-responsavel-pelo-caso-deixa-cargo.html>; <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/veja-o-que-se-sabe-sobre-o-caso-do-ex-minister-da-educacao-milton-ribeiro/>; <https://g1.globo.com/fantastico/noticia/2022/06/26/exclusivo-empresario-que-denuncio-esquema-no-mec-diz-como-era-a-abordagem-por-propina.ghtml>

15. <https://br.noticias.yahoo.com/justica-determina-prisao-preventiva-de-ex-ministro-milton-ribeiro-e-pastores-lobistas-113330700.html?>

16. <https://g1.globo.com/fantastico/noticia/2022/06/20/comunidades-terapeuticas-tem-recebido-cada-vez-mais-dinheiro-publico-repassado-por-municipios-estados-e-pela-union.ghtml>

application of corporal punishment, including the imposition of dietary restrictions for those who do not attend the activities imposed in the place, such as, for example, participating in Evangelical services.

It is also worth mentioning the increasing presence of Evangelicals in the Conselhos Tutelares, municipal public bodies that have a role in defending the rights of children and adolescents.<sup>17</sup> The relationship between the growth of Evangelicals in Conselhos Tutelares and the increase in cases in which Candomblecist and Umbanda parents have lost custody of their children for taking them to participate in religious activities seems obvious to us (see page 31). The complaints, in general, speak of ill-treatment, sexual abuse, and false imprisonment.<sup>18</sup> In most cases, the allegations are proven unfounded. But there are cases in which the judiciary resists returning children to the custody of mothers and fathers. And even if you restore custody, family relationships will be forever compromised. The trauma will always be there. So, this layer of terror now imposes itself on our lives: the fear of losing custody of our children because we want to raise them in a religious and cultural environment that, for many of us, is what affirms our ancestry and identity in the world.

Again, I don't want to demonize Evangelicals in general. I won't use the same strategy they use against our religious people. Furthermore, many progressive Evangelicals have taken important measures to combat homophobia, for example, with important steps to enter institutional politics.<sup>19</sup> However, it is observable that many of the aggressions that are suffered today by the devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions are perpetrated by Evangelical people or, during the attacks, offenses are uttered using terms that are easily attributable to Evangelicals, especially neo-Pentecostals (see page 37). In other words, it is as if an Evangelical culture became part of our daily lives and, unfortunately, brought hate speech, intolerance, and demonization as some of its characteristics, having the primal need to identify and destroy the enemy that, in this case, seems to rest in any other non-Evangelical religious association, including Catholics and Spiritualists but, above all, Afro-Brazilian religious communities.

One of the main goals of the Database and Report to which you now have access is to provide information that confirms the daily violence against our existence, despite our joys for symbolic victories, like the one from the Rio de Janeiro samba school that paid tribute to Exu. This report is evidence of a symptom of something very serious that is taking place in Brazil. The disease has very deep causes that will require enormous work for a perhaps utopian cure or, at least, reasonable control. We are taking an important step, but let us be prepared for the journey ahead of us. And may Exu continue to be on our side. Laroiê!

17. <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-12-15/igrejas-evangelicas-neopentecostais-dominam-conselhos-tutelares-em-sao-paulo-e-no-rio.html>

18. <https://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2020/08/07/mae-perde-guarda-da-filha-apos-jovem-participar-de-ritual-do-candomble.htm>

19. <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-09-20/evangelicos-progressistas-reagem-contr-homofobia-de-pastores-e-ensaiam-avanco-na-politica.html>



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## What is Religious Racism?

Religious racism is a form of religious intolerance or discrimination that is rooted in racialized prejudices against a particular faith or faiths. The concept of religious racism comes from Brazil, where activists use the phrase “racismo religioso” to refer to discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda. Religious racism impacts many faiths across the globe; however, the International Commission to Combat Religious Racism (ICCR) was formed to focus on discrimination against African and African diaspora religions because this is one of the least studied and least recognized of types of racism or religious intolerance.

## The History of Race and Religion in Brazil

Brazil is home to the largest population of people of African descent outside the African continent. As of 2010, Brazil’s population was approximately 191 million people. More than half of these individuals, around 97 million, self-identified as people of African descent.<sup>1</sup> This is largely because more than 4.8 million enslaved Africans landed in Brazil during the Atlantic slave trade between the 15th and 19th centuries.<sup>2</sup> This accounts for around 45% of the 10.7 million enslaved persons who arrived in the Americas.

Many of the Afro-Brazilian religions discussed in this report have their roots in the beliefs and practices of the Africans who were trafficked to Brazil during the Atlantic trade. The negative public perceptions of these faiths can likewise be connected to Brazil’s long history of racialized discrimination and oppression. Today, Afro-Brazilian religions are protected by law; however, most of these faiths have been persecuted and prosecuted at various points in Brazilian history. They were often regarded as “primitive” beliefs systems that hindered the progress of society.

## Why This Report Focuses on Religious Racism in Brazil

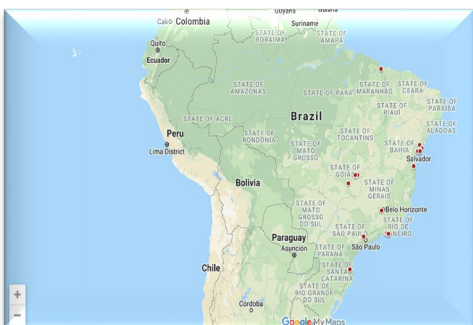
The report of the ICCRR focuses on Brazil because, as the subsequent pages will illustrate, intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions has reached a critical stage in terms of both severity and frequency of attacks. As the Brazilian government and various NGOs have documented, devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions are the victims in the vast majority of cases of religious intolerance in Brazil in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and have suffered hundreds, perhaps thousands, of violent and non-violent assaults. Their fundamental human rights as well as their safety and security are in constant jeopardy.

While these issues are discussed in Brazilian media, they have garnered little attention outside Brazil. This report is an effort to raise international awareness about religious racism in Brazil as well as to generate conversation about the meaning of religious freedom and the nature of the greatest threats to this freedom. In a world centered on understanding conflicts between Abrahamic religions, minority faiths often get forgotten or overlooked. However, the situation in Brazil raises important questions about the current global religious climate and the meaning of concepts like genocide and terrorism.

1. Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, “Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its fourteenth session: Mission to Brazil,” Sept 4, 2014, UN Doc. A/HRC/27/68/Add.1, ¶ 7.
2. Slave Voyages Database, “Estimates,” <https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

## Mapping and Documenting “Religious Racism” in Brazil



This report analyzes the 500 cases in the Religious Racism Database published on the official website of the ICCRR—[www.religiusracism.org](http://www.religiusracism.org). The report is designed to provide some insights about the patterns and statistics that can be observed from these cases. All the cases in the database and this report were compiled based on court records, academic publications, newspaper articles, and social media posts. All sources are cited in the database spreadsheet. Throughout the report, examples are cited using case numbers, which reference the numbers assigned in the database spreadsheet.

This report has been developed with an interactive format. If you click on photos, you will be taken to the website providing the source of the photo. There are also videos embedded in this document that allow you to see firsthand some of the intolerance that is occurring in Brazil.

### Some Limitations of this Report:

Sources: This report is based entirely upon written and audio-visual sources. However, relying on recorded sources (rather than personal interviews with victims) skews the type of information that is included. Certain types of intolerance (i.e.-drug traffickers expelling devotees from their communities) are rarely publicized because the victims fear further reprisals. Additionally, smaller, more rural communities may not have equal access to media sources to circulate information about their experiences. Therefore, this data should not be assumed to be an accurate representation about what forms of intolerance are most common or where the majority of intolerance is occurring. This report is merely intended to provide some broader insights about the data that is publicly available.

Terminology: This report is written for an audience of non-practitioners; therefore, some of the terminology used in this document does not align with the worldview of devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions. One particularly important example is the concept of “crimes against property” or references to “places of worship.” First and foremost, places of worship (“terreiros”) may not be separate from the home of priests and practitioners. It is common for devotees to reside in a place of worship and/or to keep religious shrines in one’s home. Second, a place of worship in Afro-Brazilian religions should not be viewed as a replaceable structure or building. It is common for devotees of Afro-Brazilian faiths to have a spiritual relationship with the land (i.e.- bury sacred items or plant sacred herbs and trees within the place of worship). Therefore, the vandalism or destruction of these places is more detrimental than the financial costs of repairs, and relocation does not offer a complete solution to this form of intolerance.

# IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

**AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIONS**- Religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda that have a strong influence from the African continent and/or from people of African descent

**BABALORIXÁ**- title of male priests in some Afro-Brazilian religions

**CANDOMBLÉ**- An Afro-Brazilian religion

**IYALORIXÁ**- title of female priests in some Afro-Brazilian religions

**MÃE DE SANTO (“MOTHER OF SAINT”)**- title of female priests in some Afro-Brazilian religions

**MACUMBA**- sorcery or black magic; this term is similar to the popular use of “voodoo” in English

**PAI DE SANTO (“FATHER OF SAINT”)**- title of male priests in some Afro-Brazilian religions

**ORIXÁ**- a type of spirit or deity venerated in most Afro-Brazilian religions

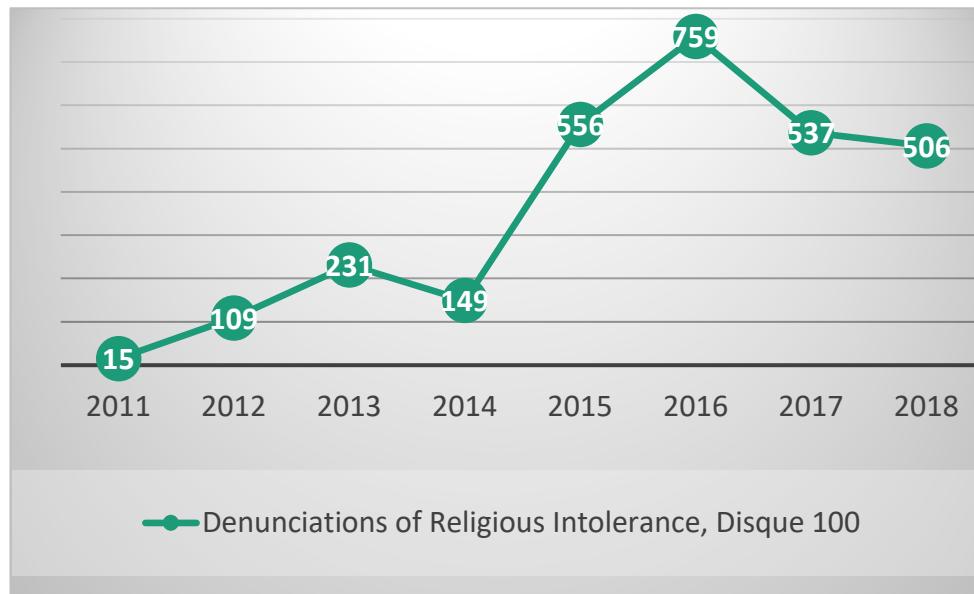
**TERREIRO**- A place of worship in Afro-Brazilian religions

**UMBANDA**- An Afro-Brazilian religion

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# RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN BRAZIL: DISQUE 100 DATA



The Government of Brazil, through the Ministry of Women, Families and Human Rights, collects significant amounts of data about reports of violations of human rights. One of the richest data sets comes from *Disque 100*— a 24-hour hotline in Brazil that allows victims to report violations of certain categories of rights. *Disque 100* collects information on the location where the violation occurred (state and type of locale); the age, race, and gender of the victim; the age, race, and gender of the perpetrator; the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim; among other things. *Disque 100* data is used throughout this report as a comparison for the statistics in the Religious Racism Database to analyze consistencies and inconsistencies between religious intolerance generally and intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions specifically.

*Disque 100* collected data on denunciations (reports) of religious intolerance between 2011 and 2018.<sup>1</sup> It received reports of 2,862 cases over those eight years. In their initial reporting year, Disque 100 received a mere 15 denunciations of religious intolerance. In the following three years, reports ranged between 109 and 231. In 2015, the figures climbed drastically, reaching a peak of 759 in 2016 and remaining above 500 reports annually. The rapid rise of cases of religious intolerance in 2015 illustrates the need to further investigate the religious climate in Brazil and the reasons for this dramatic increase.

The decline in denunciations of religious intolerance to *Disque 100* in 2017 and 2018 should not necessarily be read as a decline in acts of intolerance. One should still note that these figures are more than double or triple those reported between 2012 and 2014. Furthermore, the recent decline in reporting could be the result of victims choosing to make their denunciations to other state or non-governmental organizations, or deciding not to report the crime at all.

1. Disque 100 reported data for the first half of 2019 and then stopped publishing reports on religious intolerance.

# INTOLERANCE AGAINST AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIONS

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Between 2011 and 2018, *Disque 100* received 660 reports of cases of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions. Similar to general cases of religious intolerance, denunciations of religious racism more than doubled between 2014 and 2015, and more than quadrupled between 2014 and 2016. Also like general reports of religious intolerance, denunciations of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions peaked in 2016 at 181 cases, before falling slightly to 145 in 2017 and 157 in 2018. (Figure 1.)



Figure 1

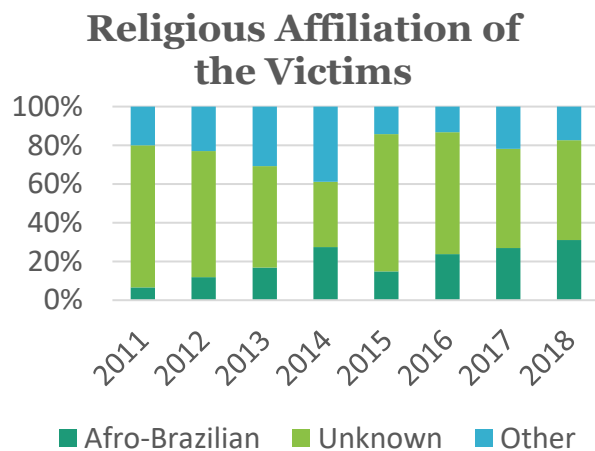


Figure 2

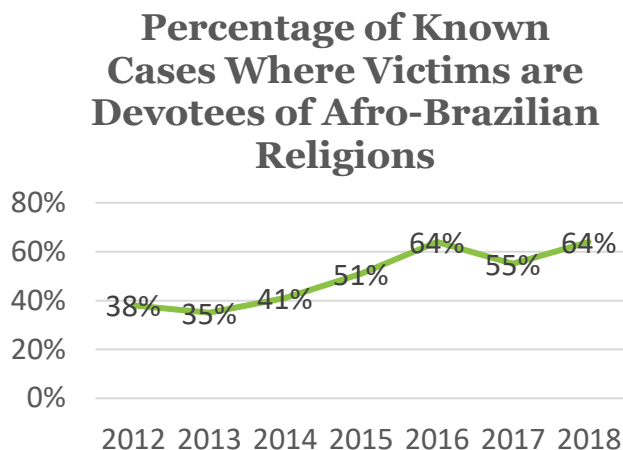


Figure 3

Merely looking at the total number of reports of religious intolerance in any year versus the number of cases of discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religions makes the figures for the latter appear deceptively small. However, a shocking percentage of the cases listed in the *Disque 100* report contain no data on the religious affiliation of the victim. In 2015, for example, the religious affiliation of the victim was unreported in more than 70% of cases.

In years where the religious affiliation is known in a greater percentage of cases, reports of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions increase drastically. (Figure 2) Furthermore, from 2015-2018, devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions have been the victim in more than 50% of cases where religious affiliation is known. (Figure 3)

# INTOLERANCE AGAINST AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIONS

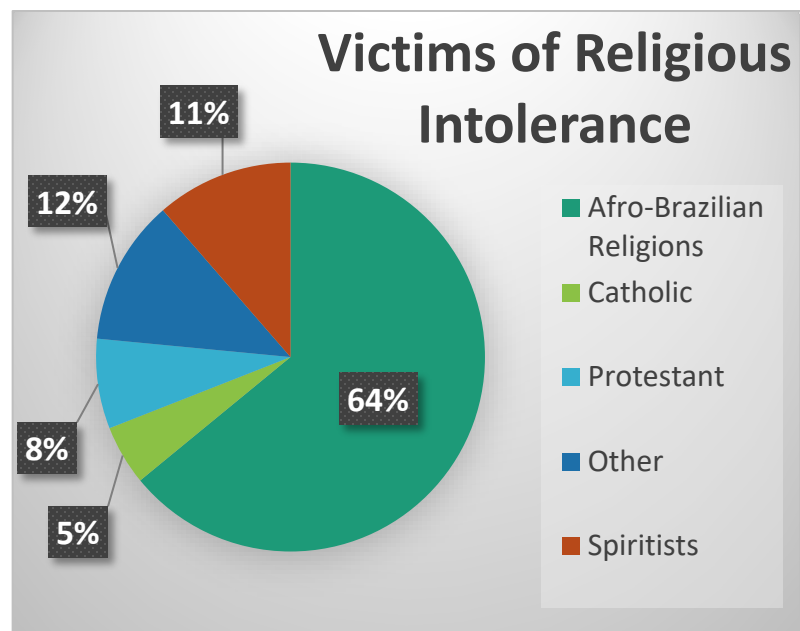
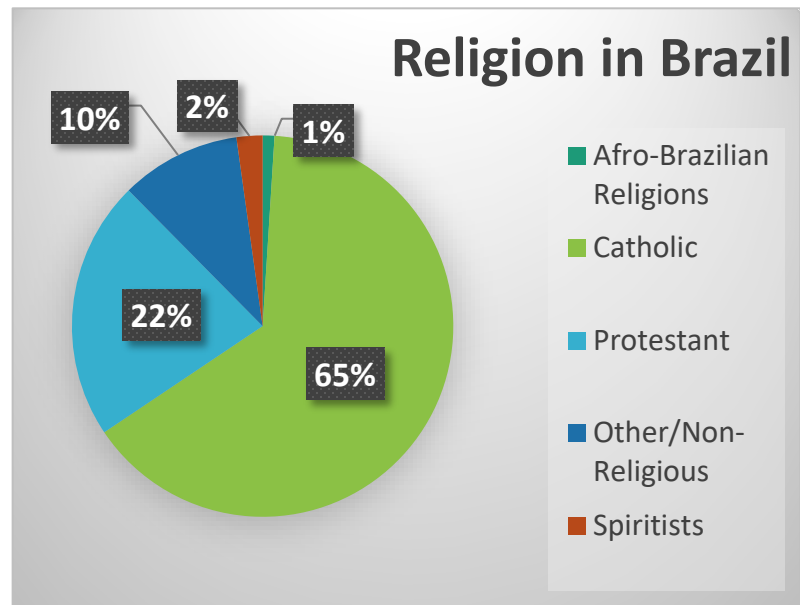
## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The *Disque 100* data showing that Afro-Brazilian religions represent nearly two-thirds of cases of religious intolerance in Brazil becomes more concerning when placed in broader context.

According to official Census statistics, devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions are less than 1% of the population of Brazil. However, in 2016 and 2018, they were 64% of victims of religious intolerance in cases where affiliation was known.

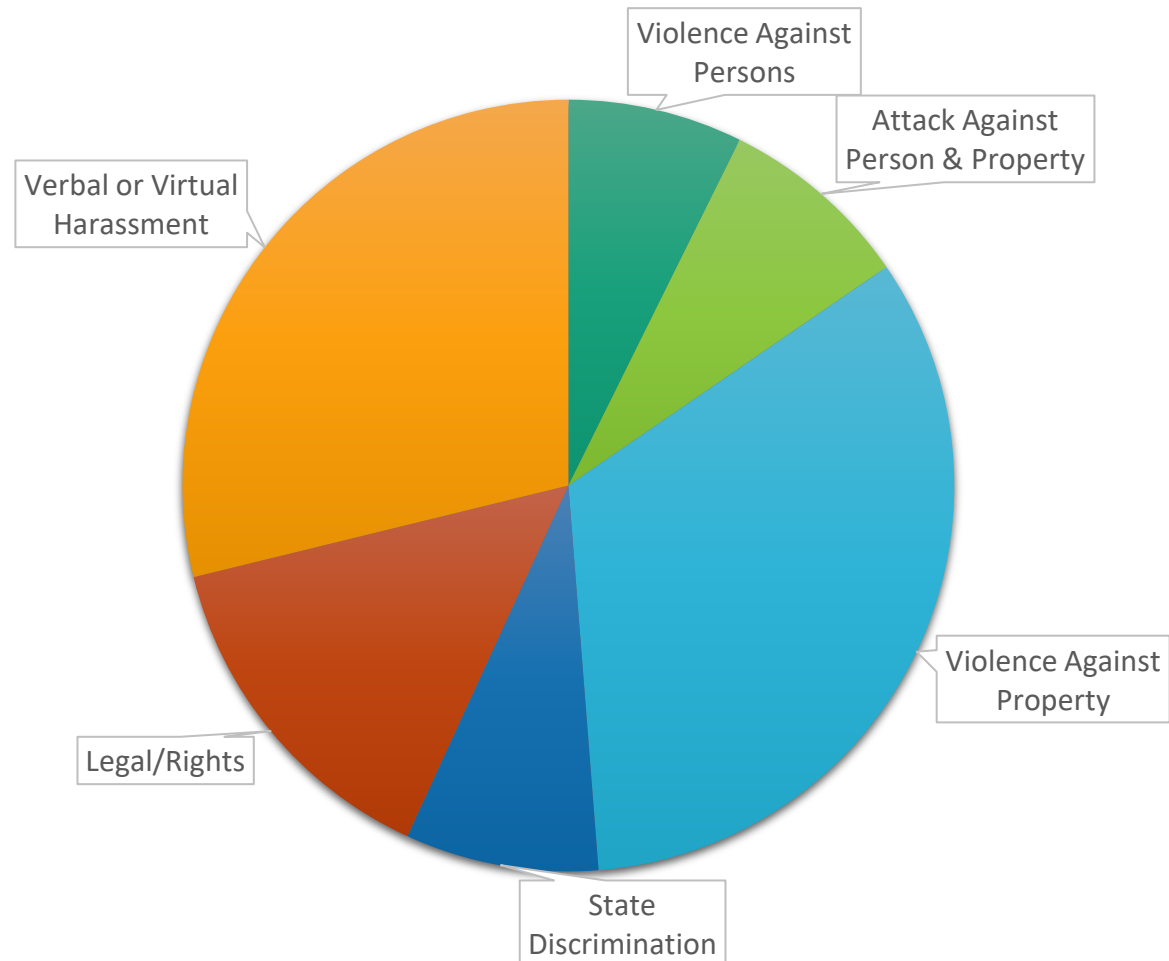
Sheer numbers of cases are also staggering. The Palmares Cultural Foundation (a federal public institution dedicated to the promotion and preservation of black influence on Brazilian society) documented **218 violent attacks** against devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions and their places of worship between 2010-2015.<sup>1</sup>

Later data is even more concerning. In a single week in July 2017, seven terreiros were destroyed in the city of Nova Iguaçu (Rio de Janeiro) alone.<sup>2</sup> In September 2017, at least another 30 terreiros were destroyed across the state of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>3</sup>



1. This data is referenced in the United States Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report (2015)* available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/256549.pdf>
2. "Sétimo terreiro é depredado em Nova Iguaçu nos últimos meses," *O Dia* (Rio de Janeiro), (July 9, 2017) available at <http://odia.ig.com.br/rio-de-janeiro/2017-09-07/setimo-terreiro-e-depredado-em-nova-iguacu-nos-ultimos-meses.html?fref=gc&dti=177840008944483> (last visited October 28, 2018).
3. Robert Muggah, "In Brazil Religious Gang Leaders Say They're Waging a Holy War," *The Conversation*, November 2, 2017.

# TYPES OF “RELIGIOUS RACISM” IN THE DATABASE

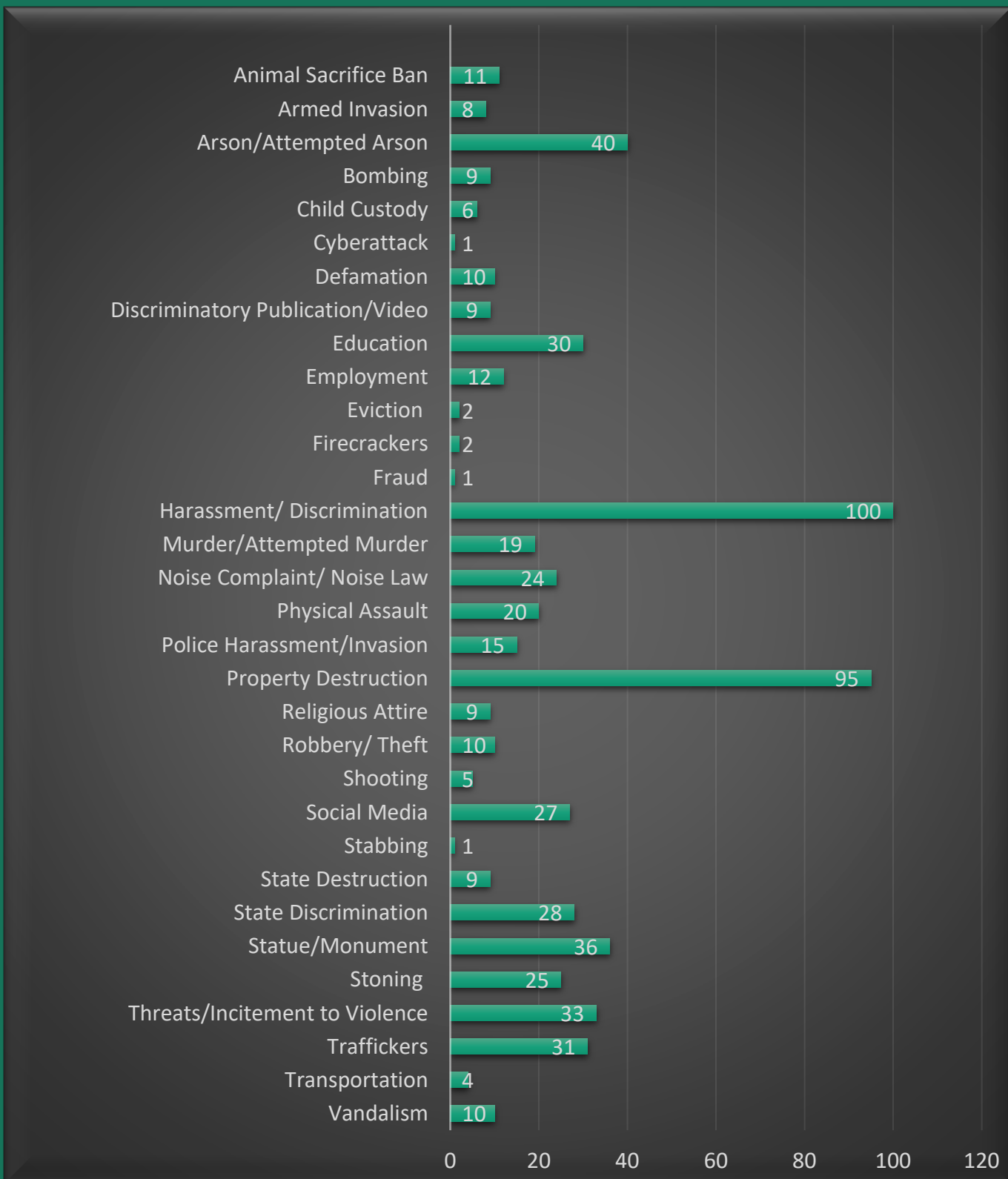


The above table shows the percentage of different types of cases of religious intolerance that are documented in the Religious Racism database. It is important to remember; however, that the database does not reflect the actual percentages of cases of religious intolerance that are occurring in Brazil. The database includes only cases that have a written or audio-visual record; therefore, there is a bias toward the representation of the types of cases that victims would be likely to report to news outlets or on social media, as well as court cases that are published in open access materials. Cases involving minors are likely underreported as some information about these cases is restricted to protect the identity and well-being of the minors. Additionally, cases involving physical attacks on people and places of worship are extremely underrepresented in the database. Victims suffering this kind of trauma are less likely to file official reports or publicize their experiences due to fear of further reprisals.

It is important to note that despite these factors that should limit the records of physical violence against devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions and their places of worship, these cases comprise 63% of the database. This suggests that violence against people and property likely represent an extremely high percentage of actual cases of religious racism occurring in Brazil in recent years.



# TYPES OF “RELIGIOUS RACISM” IN THE DATABASE

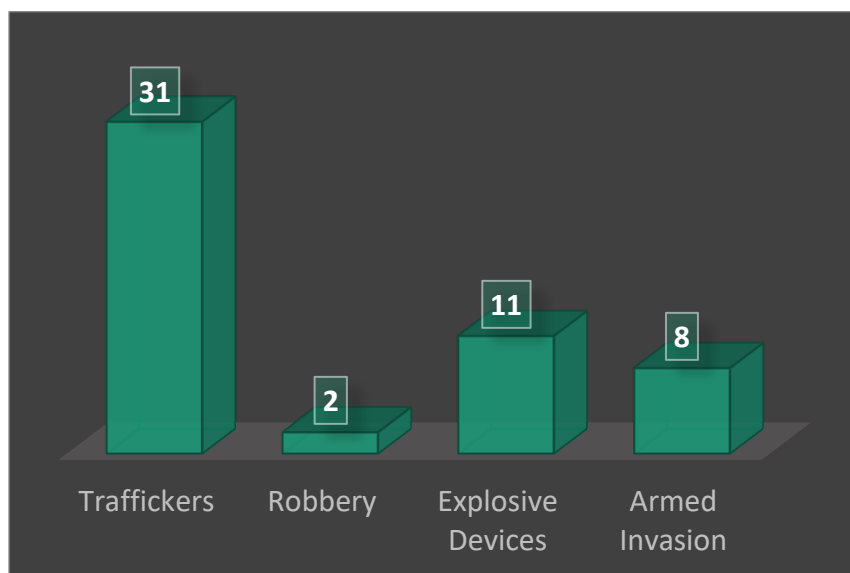


# CRIMES AGAINST PERSON & PROPERTY

**Crimes against Person and Property** is a category of offense designed to separate acts of intolerance that only target property (i.e.- a place of worship) from those that also pose a direct physical threat to devotees. These crimes include drug trafficker attacks, robbery, bombs, firecrackers, and armed invasions of places of worship. Due to the intimidation that is central to these attacks, they are rarely publicly reported and are thus extremely under-represented in the database.

## Armed Invasions

This category refers to incidents where assailants entered an Afro-Brazilian place of worship armed with a deadly weapon (i.e. a gun or knife) with the intention of harming or threatening devotees. (Murder and cases where arguments began after the individual was already inside the place of worship are listed separately). There are 8 cases in the database that fall into this category. In these cases, the perpetrators are usually either (retired) police officers who use their power and privilege to harass devotees, Evangelical drug traffickers who seek to evict devotees, or robbers who intentionally target ceremonies to simultaneously steal from devotees and commit acts of religious intolerance.



## Robbery

There are only 2 cases of robbery in this database. These cases are distinguished from simple theft (of which there are 8 cases) because they involve the threat or use of force. For example, in September 2017, four masked men invaded Ilê Oguiã Olabomaxó terreiro in Olinda (Pernambuco) at 1am with guns in their hands while the terreiro was having a ceremony for Oxum (an orixá). They shouted that they wanted to get rid of the "macumba" (sorcery) and began breaking all the sacred vessels in the terreiro. They robbed devotees of their cell phones and exchanged gunfire with an officer on the street. Bullets were lodged in the door of the terreiro and the front of the building. The suspects fled the scene in a car. (Case #297)

## Explosive Devices

There are 11 incidents in the database where attackers used explosive devices (bombs, Molotov cocktails, or firecrackers) to attack Afro-Brazilian terreiros. All of these attacks occurred while devotees were inside the place of worship. For example, in late 2016 and early 2017, a neighbor repeatedly threw firecrackers into O Centro de Umbanda Oxum (Salvador, Bahia) while they were hosting celebrations. During one of the attacks, three people were injured and transported to the hospital. (Case #237, 255)

# DRUG TRAFFICKER EXPULSIONS

In May 2019, the Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance (CCIR) reported that **Evangelical drug traffickers had ordered the closure of at least 100 terreiros** in the state of Rio de Janeiro alone in 2019. These included 20 in Duque de Caxias, 15 in Nova Iguaçu, 10 in São Gonçalo, 15 in Campos, and 40 in other parts of the state.<sup>1</sup> By mid-August 2019, DECRADI (a specialized police force implemented to investigate crimes of racial and religious intolerance) announced that it had received reports of **“threats”** that these traffickers had made **against 200 terreiros in the state.**<sup>2</sup>

Due to the fear and intimidation central to these acts of intolerance, individual cases involving drug trafficker attacks are not frequently described in government press releases or disclosed to the media. Therefore, despite these staggering statistics, these cases comprise a mere 6% of the total in the Religious Racism Database. However, organizations like DECRADI and the CCIR have expressed increasing concern that drug trafficking gangs such as the TCP (Terceiro Comando Puro), are representing themselves as Christian converts who are carrying out the will of Jesus when they expel Afro-Brazilian religions from their communities.<sup>3</sup> These gangs often ban the wearing of white (a ritual color for devotees of Afro-Brazilian faiths), and threaten terreiro owners with physical violence, including death, if they continue their religious practices within the territory that the traffickers control.

1. Roberta Jansen, “Traficantes evangélicos causam terror a religiões africanas, *Terra*, August 18, 2019 at <https://www.terra.com.br/noticias/brasil/cidades/traficantes-evangelicos-causam-terror-a-religioes-africanas>
2. Amanda Prado e Pedro Bassan, “Traficantes dão ordem para fechar terreiros na Baixada Fluminense,” *Globo*, May 27, 2019 at <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2019/05/27/traficantes-dao-ordem-para-fechar-terreiros-na-baixada-fluminense.ghtml>
3. Michael Caceres, “Bonde de Jesus”: Traficantes se passam por evangélicos e atacam terreiros,” *Gospel Prime*, Aug 19, 2019 at <https://www.gospelprime.com.br/bonde-de-jesus-traficantes-se-passam-por-evangelicos-e-atacam-terreiros/>
4. For example, in 2006, the head of the Morro do Dendê traffickers, Fernandinho Guarabu, visited the Mount Sinai Assembly of God ministry and became an Evangelical Christian. Following his conversion, he “invited” all non-evangelicals to leave the area that he controlled. The Morro do Dendê traffickers closed down the 10 terreiros that operated in their territory and wrote bible verses on the walls of the community. (Case #19)

CIDADES

## Traficantes evangélicos causam terror a religiões africanas

Conversão de cúpula de facção criminosa à religião evangélica cria vertente inédita e aumenta ataques contra religiões de matrizes africanas

Source # 1

### “Bonde de Jesus”: Traficantes se passam por evangélicos e atacam terreiros

Criminosos usam o nome de Jesus para cometer atos de intolerância religiosa.

1 mês atrás em 19 de agosto de 2019  
Por Michael Caceres



Source # 3

# EXAMPLES OF EVANGELICAL TRAFFICKER ATTACKS

**Unidentified Pai de Santo**

**August 2017**

**Nova Iguaçu/RJ, Brazil**

**Play the video to the right.** As the video begins, a man (probably a pai de santo) is standing in the rubble of what used to be a place of worship. He is holding dozens of ilekes— sacred, protective necklaces— in his hands. He is breaking them one by one.

A person off camera tells the priest, “É só um diálogo que eu tô tendo com vocês. Da próxima vez eu mato.” – “This is just a dialogue that I am having with you. The next time, I (will) kill (you).” While the cameraman issues this warning, he shakes a bat at the priest which has the word “dialogue” on it.

The off camera voice tells the pai de santo that this area is under the flag of the TCP (Terceiro Comando Puro) and that Jesus is first in this territory. He admonishes the priest that he should not be putting his head on the floor (praying) in this “dog house” (referring to the sacred space that is being destroyed). He asks the priest repeatedly, “Am I lying?” Another off camera voice joins in as they tell the pai de santo that they do not permit “macumba” (sorcery) in their territory. They call him the “chief devil.”

Toward the end of the video, the person behind the camera reminds the priest, “if you rebuild this place, I will kill you.” He directs the pai de santo to a bottle laying outside the crumbled structure and orders, “There is a bottle from Satan! Break it! Break all the bottles!” The priest smashes the bottle against the partial wall.

Throughout the video, the pai de santo is wearing a t-shirt with the face of Jesus on it. Presumably, the traffickers forced him to put on this shirt prior to the start of filming.



In cases such as this, the unseen is perhaps more traumatic than what is shown in the video. The traffickers themselves filmed this attack and then circulated it as a warning to other devotees of what could happen if they continued their religious practices.

The traffickers chose what elements of the attack they wished to record and perhaps left out the most brutal components of this assault. Afro-Brazilian devotees report that in the moments before and after the filming of such videos, the priests were often brutally beaten, threatened with guns, and, in some cases, forced to swallow pieces of their ilekes.



# EXAMPLES OF EVANGELICAL TRAFFICKER ATTACKS

**Mãe Carmen de Oxum**  
**September 2017**  
**Nova Iguaçu, Brazil**  
**Case #293**

In Sept 2017, seven terrorists armed with pistols and iron bars surrounded 66-year-old Mãe Carmen when she was returning from the market. Two of the bandits ordered the people who were with Mãe Carmen to get on the ground and they held them at gunpoint while the others followed her into her terreiro. **What happened next is recorded in the video to the right.**

## **What You See in the Video**

When the video begins, the traffickers have already led Mãe Carmen into her terreiro. An off-camera voice taunts the ialorixá, saying to his co-conspirators that Mãe Carmen is the "chief of the devil." As Mãe Carmen begins to knock some of the sacred objects to the floor, the voice speaks directly to her. He orders, "Break everything because the blood of Jesus has the power. Break everything." He tells her that all the bad things in the terreiro must be undone in the name of Jesus. The man behind the camera continues to yell at her to break everything and gives her directions about which one to destroy next. He directs her toward the sacred object in the back of the room and tells her to break it, saying, "I want to see what mysteries are under there."

Throughout the video, Mãe Carmen hangs her head down as she shuffles through the wreckage of her own place of worship, following the traffickers' orders to continue the destruction. The attackers end the video after Mãe Carmen has overturned the last of her shrines.



## **After the Video Ends**

Similar to the August 2017 video on page 8, the perpetrators of this attack were the ones who filmed the destruction and circulated the video as a threat to other devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions. Also similar to that August 2017 attack, this video does not reveal the entire story. According to Mãe Carmen (who disclosed the details of her attack on numerous media outlets after this video was published), after the terreiro had been destroyed, the traffickers told her that they were acting on behalf of "the man who did not want macumba," referring to the head of one of the drug cartels. Mãe Carmen also reports that when the traffickers were leaving, some of her neighbors applauded this act of terrorism and shook hands with the perpetrators.

# EXAMPLES OF EVANGELICAL TRAFFICKER ATTACKS IN 2019



Photo Source (Above) : <https://extra.globo.com/casos-de-policia/terreiro-de-candomble-invadido-pela-segunda-vez-por-traficantes-em-nova-iguacu-23557091.html>

## **Ilê Asé Togun Jobi Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro March 2019**

Around 6pm on Monday, March 25, a member of this terreiro saw four traffickers jump the outside wall and start pulling down the security cameras. Neighbors heard crashing sounds and heard the men saying to break everything, that the place was "theirs." The traffickers forbid the terreiro owners from returning to the space and made the building their headquarters for several months. They destroyed many of the sacred objects inside the terreiro. They marked the outside wall with the words "Jesus is the owner of this place." (Case #375)

## **Unidentified Mãe de Santo Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro July 2019**

In May 2019, a representative of the federal public prosecutor, Julio José Araujo, reported that their office received a complaint that a pastor had led a group of Evangelical drug traffickers to surround 15 terreiros in Duque de Caxias and prevent any religious activities from taking place in the area. (case #381).

In July 2019, these Evangelical drug traffickers resumed their assaults on Duque de Caxias. They forced an 84-year-old mãe de santo to break all of her orixá shrines and then they destroyed the rest of her terreiro. (Case #401)

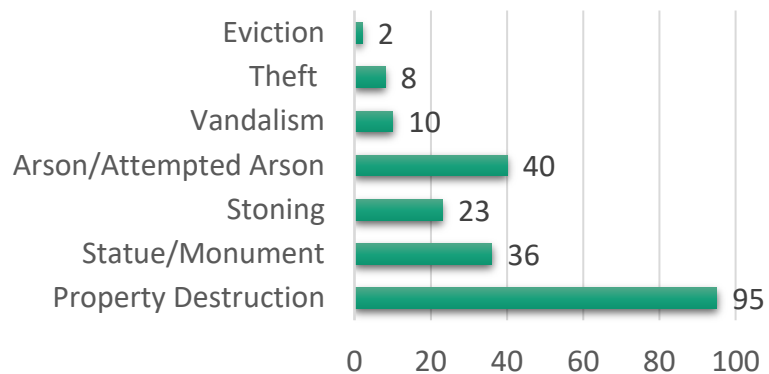


Photo Source (Right):

<http://intoleranciareligiosadossie.blogspot.com/2019/08/no-rio-traficantes-proibem-moradores-de.html>

# CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY

Crimes against property account for approximately 43% of all the cases in the database. There are several categories of offenses that fall within crimes against property: arson, stoning, theft, property destruction, eviction, vandalism and the destruction of statues or monuments.



## PROPERTY DESTRUCTION

By far, the most common type of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions in the database is the destruction of their sacred objects and/or their entire places of worship. These account for 95 of the 500 cases in the database. These offenses most commonly occur while the property owner is away or asleep. A person or group of people break in to the terreiro and begin stealing and smashing the contents. They often go to great lengths to gain access to the terreiro—jumping fences that are meters high (Case #256), cutting through barbed wire (Case #135), or throwing cement bricks at the gate (Case #97). They also frequently identify the sacred spaces of the complex and the ritual objects, and make added effort to destroy these areas or items (Case #48, 143, 308 & 343).

Unfortunately, we rarely have any insights into the motives for these attacks because the culprits are almost never identified. Authorities are often quick to characterize or classify these property destruction cases as a byproduct of robbery; however, the terreiro owners/religious leaders often report that nothing of value was taken even though there were items in the vicinity that the perpetrators, if motivated by robbery, would have stolen. These include items such as a cash box, electronics, silver, and crystal (See Case # 143, 148, 151, 171, & 267).

### Centro Espírita Afro-Brasileiro, Valparaíso, Goiás (March 2016)



Source (Photo Above): <https://www.metropoles.com/distrito-federal/religiao/centro-espirita-afro-brasileiro-e-depredado-em-valparaiso>

The photo to the left demonstrates the severity of some of these attacks. The owner of this Candomblé center, Noêmia Ferreira, was traveling for a few days. She returned on the evening of March 8 to find that unknown persons had demolished the entire exterior of her terreiro. They had destroyed her altars and sacred objects but left the furniture and appliances in the rubble. The attackers also destroyed the sacred trees and plants on the property. (Case #211)



# PROPERTY DESTRUCTION

Although the majority of the perpetrators in property destruction cases are never caught, there are a few instances where the perpetrators are known that provide some insights about the motive behind these attacks. In nearly every case where the attackers are known, they are Christians who claim that devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions worship Satan and who speak about the need to drive the devil from their communities. For example, in May 2008, four members of Nova Geração de Jesus Cristo (an evangelical church), arrived at Centro Espírita Cruz de Oxalá (an Umbanda temple) in Catete, Rio de Janeiro. There were about 50 devotees outside waiting for the 7pm service to begin. The church members called the devotees "devil worshippers," and forced their way inside. They broke about 30 religious images, shelves, and a fan. (Case #33) A more recent example comes from 2018, when a man named Leonardo invaded Flor do Matão Deus é Quem Guia in São Luís, Maranhão with a bible in his hands. He broke everything in sight, shouting "get out Satan." (Case #346)



Flor do Matão Deus é Quem Guia  
Source: <https://teiapopular.org/homem-invade-e-quebra-tudo-em-terreiro-no-maranhao/>

## **Ilê Asé Togun Jobi, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro (Sept 2017)**

Furthermore, in addition to forcing priests of Afro-Brazilian religions to destroy their own places of worship, Evangelical drug traffickers have also invaded Candomblé and Umbanda terreiros and destroyed these sacred spaces. This was the case with Ilê Asé Togun Jobi; in Sept 2017, traffickers destroyed sacred objects, furniture, and musical instruments in this terreiro. The terreiro was shut down for three months (with members operating in a different location) before the traffickers gave them authorization to return to this space. This authorization was conditioned on the stipulation that the terreiro would not hold public services. (Case #295)

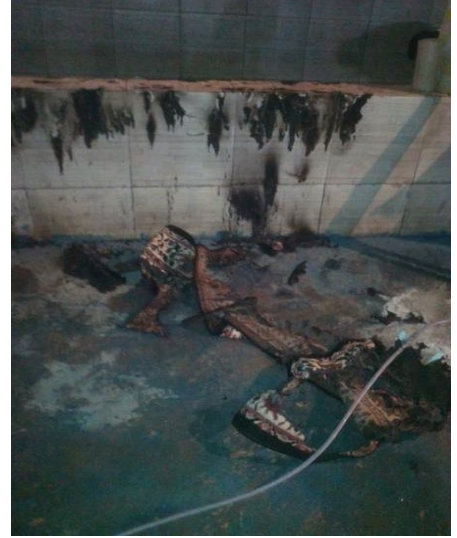


Source (Photos Above): <https://www.geledes.org.br/setimo-terreiro-e-depredado-em-nova-iguacu-nos-ultimos-meses/>



# ARSON

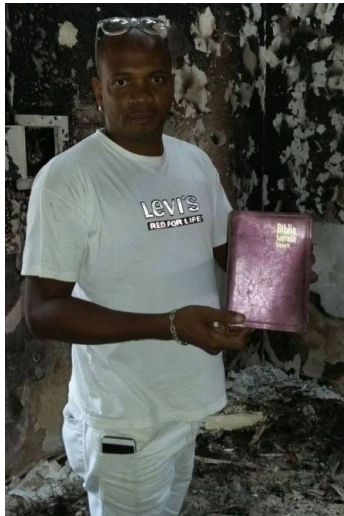
Another common form of Crimes Against Property is arson. There are 40 cases in the database where (usually unidentified) perpetrators have set fire to Afro-Brazilian places of worship. (There is an additional arson case where a devotee's car was set ablaze). In other instances, attackers have also set fire to statues of Afro-Brazilian deities (see pg. 18)



Arson has become a more common method of religious intolerance since 2015. On Sept 12 of that year, two of the most famous arson cases took place in the Federal District. In the first case, attackers used a car to knock down the gate of Baba Djair de Logun Ede's terreiro (shown above). They set the place on fire; however, neighbors were able to extinguish the fire before it destroyed the terreiro. It burned a chair and a wall.

(Case #181)

A few hours later, unknown persons set fire to the terreiro of Babazinho de Oxalá. This terreiro (pictured right) was completely destroyed. The pai de santo discovered an unscorched bible in the rubble, an apparent "calling card" of the attackers. (Case #182)



Source (All Above Photos): <https://extra.globo.com/noticias/brasil/terreiros-de-candomble-sao-incendiados-em-goias-encontrei-uma-biblia-diz-dono-de-um-dos-locais-17476382.html>

# EXAMPLES OF ARSON

## **Terreiro of Rosimeire Correia Luziânia, Goiás Nov 2017**

The attackers first ransacked part of this terreiro (pictured right), throwing pots, pans and other items on the floor as well as breaking dishes. Then, they set fire to the part of the terreiro that housed the sacred objects. (Case #308)

Sources (Photos to the Right):  
<http://intoleranciareligiosadossie.blogspot.com/2017/11/terreiro-de-candomble-e-alvo-de.html>;  
<https://g1.globo.com/go/goias/noticia/terreiro-de-candomble-e-depredado-e-incendiado-em-luziania.ghtml>



## **O Centro Espírita Caboclo Pena Branca, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro May 2018**

Vandals entered this Candomblé terreiro, broke the sacred objects into pieces and then set fire to the place. They wrote on the walls telling them "get out macumbeiros," and "we don't want macumba here." The fire department came to the scene but the terreiro was completely destroyed. (Case #326)

Source (Photo Above): <https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/terreiro-alvo-de-vandalismo-em-nova-iguacu-22663967>



# STONING

Another common method of attacking Afro-Brazilian places of worship is stoning. There are 23 of these cases in the Religious Racism database and they tend to follow a particular pattern— the perpetrators typically launch large rocks at the place of worship, usually while people are inside and sometimes during ceremonies. These rocks will often penetrate the roof of the structure, narrowly missing or injuring the people inside.

For example, Ilê Axé Omó Omin Tundê (pictured below) has been stoned multiple times. During one of the attacks, an elderly woman was injured. Therefore, they installed a net to catch any rocks that broke through the roof (Case # 144, 214).

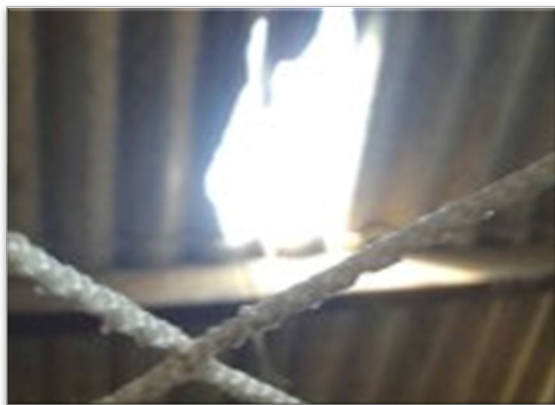
Source (photos below):

<https://www.facebook.com/ileaseomo.omintunde>



In the photo above, Babalorixa Márcio Virginio da Silva demonstrates the size of the stones that were launched at his terreiro in June 2017, which narrowly missed one of his godchildren. (Case# 265)

Source (Photo Above): <https://extra.globo.com/casos-de-policia/um-rio-de-odio-terreiro-de-candomble-atacado-com-pedras-ovos-legumes-podres-21645654.html>



# VANDALISM

The last form of Crime against Property that targets Afro-Brazilian places of worship is vandalism. Although much of the property destruction on the previous pages might legally be categorized as vandalism in some countries, this term is used in this report to refer to attacks that only involve the exterior of the terreiro or center, and are relatively minor in nature. There are 10 cases of vandalism in the database.



The image above shows a terreiro in Lauro de Freitas (Bahia), which was vandalized in 2017 with the graffiti, "The blood of Jesus has power." ("O sangue de Jesus tem poder") (Case #281)

Source (Photo Above): <https://www.correio24horas.com.br/noticia/nid/policia-investiga-vandalismo-em-terreiro-de-candomble-em-lauro-de-freitas/>

## **Casa de Oxumarê, Salvador, Bahia Unknown Date & October 2018 (Case #350)**

In the photos to the right, one can see an act of vandalism against one of the most famous Candomblé houses in Bahia, Casa de Oxumarê. The far right shows a mural that was featured on one of the exterior walls of the terreiro. Unknown persons painted over that mural with a Christian image and the words "The Lord is my shepherd. He will never fail me."



In October 2018, Casa de Oxumarê was vandalized again. This time, vandals spraypainted the words "Jesus is the Way" ("Jesus é o caminho") on the external wall.

Source (Photos Above and Right): <https://www.correio24horas.com.br/noticia/nid/terreiro-oxumare-em-salvador-e-alvo-de-intolerancia-religiosa/>



# STATUES/ MONUMENTS

There are numerous statues or monuments representing Africana religions in Brazil. These are often statues of the orixás—deities who are worshipped/honored in most Afro-Brazilian faiths. One of the most famous of these is Dique do Tororó (pictured to the right) in Salvador, Bahia. These statues and monuments occasionally serve as religious sites; however, they also frequently double as tourist attractions—which reflect the cultural and religious tourism that draws millions of visitors to Brazil every year.

There are 36 cases in the database that document a growing intolerance for these public representations of Afro-Brazilian religions. Most of these cases, like those described below and on page 18, involve the physical destruction of these statues or monuments. These statues have been burned, decapitated, dismembered and covered in graffiti. Vandals attack the same sites again and again, often escalating their attacks over time. The defacing and destruction of these monuments illustrates a fanatical kind of intolerance for Afro-Brazilian religions- a refusal to accept even passive representations of these faiths.



Dique do Tororó, Salvador, Bahia  
(Author's Personal Archive, 2018)

In addition to the physical destruction of Afro-Brazilian statues and monuments, legislators and Christian religious groups have lobbied for the removal of these statues of African deities. They argue that such displays violate the secularity of the Brazilian state. However, these groups never voice similar objections to the giant statue of Jesus that stands over the city of Rio de Janeiro or similar Christian monuments that dominate public landscapes in Brazil.



## **Statue of Iemanjá September 19, 2019 Florianópolis**

In the video to the left, a woman in Florianópolis takes a sledgehammer to a statue of Iemanjá (the patron deity of Brazil) in broad daylight. She strikes the statue at least 20 times, first attacking the hands and then the base. The video later shows the woman getting into a car and fleeing the scene. (Case #419)

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcCtxBvcj20>

# STATUES / MONUMENTS

## **Statue of Iemanjá, Teresina, Piauí October 2012 (Case #100)**

Vandals attacked this statue of the orixá Iemanjá (shown to the right) in October 2012. They severed her arms, as well as set fire to her breasts and legs.

Source (Photo to the Right):  
<https://www.midiagospel.com.br/brasil/ie-manja-apedrejada-sem-provas-jornalista-cita-evangelicos>



## **Statue of Iemanjá, João Pessoa, Paraíba April 2013 (Case # 115)**

Unknown persons decapitated this statue of the orixá Iemanjá (pictured to the right).

Source (Photo to the Right):  
<http://g1.globo.com/pb/paraiba/noticia/2013/04/vandalos-destroem-imagem-de-ianjanja-em-joao-pessoa.html>



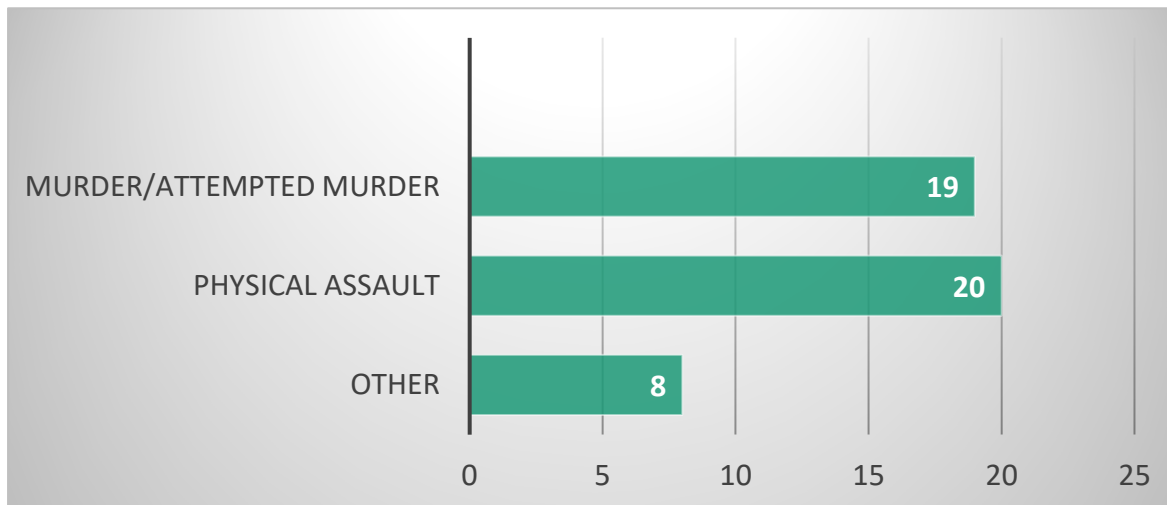
## **Statue of Oxalá Federal District April 2016 (Case #221)**

Vandals set fire to this statue of the orixá Oxalá in 2016. The pictures to the right show the statue during and after the fire.



Source (Photos Above): <https://www.metropoles.com/tipo-assim/patrimonio-imaterial-praca-dos-orixas-e-pedaco-da-africa-em-Brasilia>; [https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/cidades/2016/04/11/interna\\_cidadesdf,526657/vandalos-ateiam-fogo-em-imagem-de-orixas-na-prainha-do-lago-sul.shtm](https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/cidades/2016/04/11/interna_cidadesdf,526657/vandalos-ateiam-fogo-em-imagem-de-orixas-na-prainha-do-lago-sul.shtm)

# VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS



In the Religious Racism database, there are 47 cases that involve violence against persons. These include 19 cases of murder or attempted murder, 20 cases of physical assault, 2 cases of stoning, 5 cases of shooting and 1 case of stabbing. Representing 10% of the database, this violence against persons is a growing component of religious racism that cannot be ignored.

## MURDER

A shocking number of Afro-Brazilian priests have been murdered over the last several years. Other scholars are working on mapping and analyzing these murders. At this time, only 19 of these cases have been included in the Religious Racism database. The cases that have been included either have some direct evidence of a connection to religious racism or occurred under suspicious circumstances. These suspicious circumstances might include: 1) the murder of multiple priests in a particular city or region in a short time span (i.e. Cases #186, 195, 196, 202, all occurred in the Greater Belem region of Pará in late 2015; 2) the murder of priests in an area where there has been a recent spike in religious intolerance (Case # 339), or 3) the murder occurred in a place of worship or while the priest was carrying out some religious function and there was no identified motive (Case #317 & #340)

Although the cases lacking direct evidence of religious intolerance comprise the vast majority of the few murder cases in this database, there are a few striking murders or attempted murders that clearly involved religious disputes. For instance, in March 2018, pai de santo André Luiz Ferreira Franco and about 15 other people were at his home, performing a ritual. A neighbor, who could see over the fence that they were having a ceremony, repeatedly shouted that he was going to come over there and end the "macumba." Shortly thereafter, he broke through the gate, holding a knife, saying that he was going to kill Franco. The pastor of the church that the neighbor attends happened to be passing by and managed to disarm him. The neighbor was briefly taken to jail but has since been released and Franco reports that he continues to harass them. (Case #320) For other murders clearly motivated by religious racism, see Case #98 and #133.



# PHYSICAL ASSAULT

There are 20 cases of physical assault in the Religious Racism database. These cases range in severity from attackers slapping a pai de santo to beating an iyalorixá with a bible to trying to set a devotee on fire. However, the cases that represent one of the most concerning trends are the physical assaults that minors have carried out against their classmates.

One of these student-on-student physical assaults occurred in August 2015, after a friend posted a photo of 14-year-old Agnes on social media which revealed that Agnes was a devotee of Candomblé. When Agnes went to school (Colégio Estadual Alfredo Parodi in Curitiba, Paraná) the next day, a girl in her class said that she did not want to sit next to a "macumbeira." When Agnes tried to respond, another classmate got up and kicked her. Agnes fell and hit her face on a wall. Other classmates encouraged the assailant, yelling "kick that macumba." Agnes' parents took her to the hospital to get treatment for her injuries. Her mother claims that a month later, the school had still done nothing to punish the perpetrators. Agnes has an 11-year-old brother who refused to go to school because of the attack on his sister. (Case #175) Agnes' injuries are pictured to the right.



Source for Above Photo: <https://www.geledes.org.br/jovem-de-14-anos-praticante-de-candomble-denuncia-ter-sido-agredida-por-intolerancia-religiosa-em-curitiba/>

In April 2016, classmates carried out a similar assault on 16-year-old Isadora Jacques Leão, a student in Aparecida de Goiânia, Goiás. Isadora posted a picture on social media wearing a Candomblé necklace. Other students at her school saw the photo and began to call her a "macumbeira." A large group organized after school, planning to ambush her. However, a teacher learned of the problem and took her home from school.

The day after, another group of students organized and planned to assault Isadora after school (including some of the members of the first group). Isadora's friend gave her a bicycle to help her get away but one of the attackers grabbed her off the bike and knocked her down, yelling "aren't you a macumbeira? What does your macumba do now?"

After students made two back-to-back attempts to beat up Isadora after school, her mother kept her home for a few days while she spoke to the school administration to try to resolve the problem. When Isadora did return to school, her mother drove her. However, on April 5, 2016 Isadora's mother had car trouble and was unable to take her to and from school. On that date, two female students beat Isadora, knocking her down then kicking and punching her in her face and back. They called her a "macumbeira" and said that their god was greater than her "macumba." (Case #217, 218, 220)



# STONING OF PERSONS

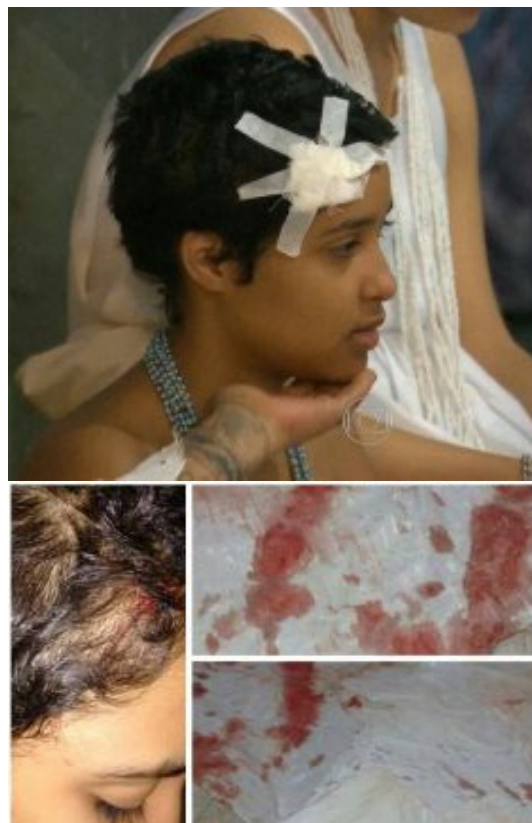
In addition to the 23 cases of stoning of Afro-Brazilian places of worship discussed on page 15, there are two cases in the database where assailants stoned devotees. In the first case, the victim was an 11-year-old girl; in the second case, the victim was a 65-year-old woman. Both victims suffered serious injuries to the head.

## **Kailane Campos Rio de Janeiro June 2015**

In June 2015, two adult males followed the Campos family as they were walking home from a Candomblé service in northern Rio de Janeiro. The men carried bibles and shouted at the family, calling them "devils," telling them that they were going "burn in hell," and that "Jesus will return." They also threw stones at the adherents, one of which bounced off a pole and hit the 11-year-old daughter, Kailane, in the head. The impact caused her to faint and suffer from memory loss. Her family rushed her to the hospital. The perpetrators were never identified. (Case #159)

Photos (Right) from:

<https://blackwomenofbrazil.co/religious-intolerance-leads-to-death-of-90-year-old/>



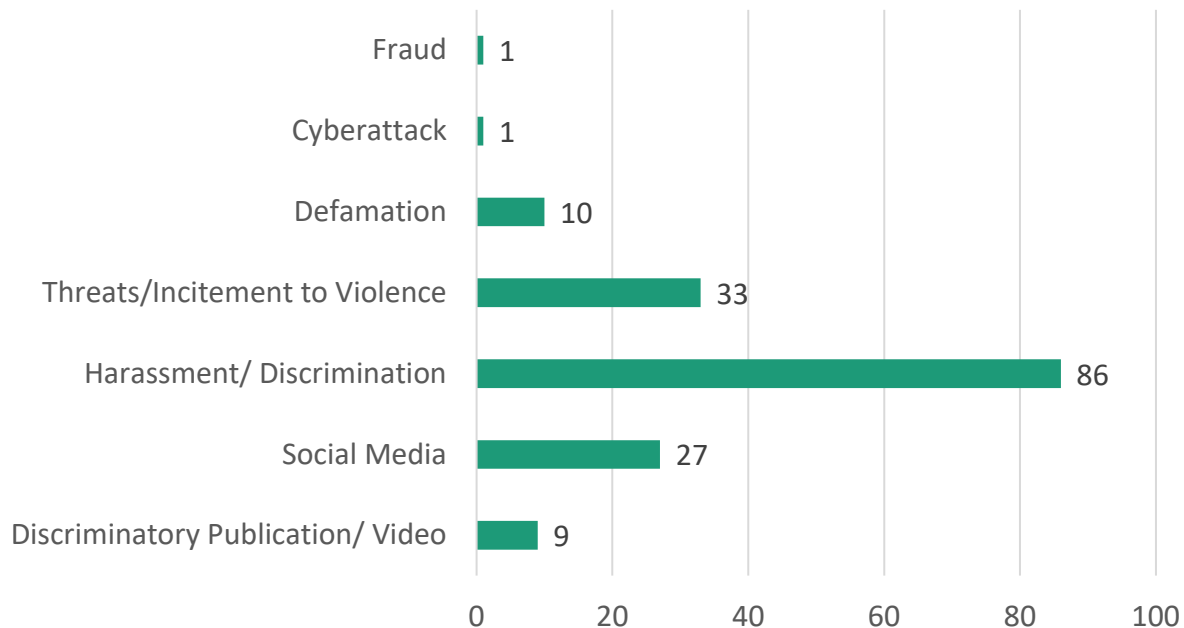
## **Maria da Conceição Cerqueira da Silva Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro August 2017**

Maria da Conceição Cerqueira da Silva is a 65-year-old Candomblé adherent. She was walking in the street near her home and a neighbor, who had repeatedly made offensive statements to her, said "here comes that old macumbeira. Today I will put an end to it." Then, the neighbor threw a stone, hitting Maria in face. Maria went home and her family took her to the hospital. Her injuries required stitches. (Case #284)

Photo (Right) from: <https://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/idosa-e-agredida-a-pedradas-e-familia-denuncia-intolerancia-religiosa-em-nova-iguacu.ghtml>



# VERBAL/VIRTUAL INTOLERANCE



Perhaps the broadest category of intolerance in the database is that of verbal/virtual intolerance. The subcategories include: discriminatory publications or videos (9 cases); social media posts (27 cases); general harassment or discrimination (86 cases), defamation (10 cases), threats/incitement to violence (33 cases), and others (2 cases). Within these subcategories, these cases vary greatly.

## DISCRIMINATORY PUBLICATIONS/VIDEOS

The database begins with a case about discriminatory publication. In 1992, *Veja* magazine published an image of Mãe Gilda dressed in her priestess clothes, with an offering for the orixás at her feet. In October 1999, the Universal Church took this image and published it in their *Folha Universal* magazine in a story about how "charlatan macumbeiros" had created a "deception market" in Brazil and were hurting the lives of their clients. The magazine had a circulation of 1,372,000 people. Some of Mãe Gilda's followers read this and thought she had abandoned her faith and was supporting the message of the Universal Church. Mãe Gilda's health deteriorated and on January 21, 2000, she died. Brazil's National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance is now celebrated on January 21 in memory of Mãe Gilda. (Case #001)

Many of the other cases in this category (Case #9, 58, 99) relate to the posting of videos that demonize Afro-Brazilian religions— depicting devotees as devil worshippers, sorcerers, and criminals. The individuals who produce these videos also frequently encourage their followers to attack devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions and their places of worship. These cases are important because they can be the fodder or foundations for the spread of religious racism, and physical acts of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions have been directly linked to these videos (see Case #94).

# SOCIAL MEDIA

There are 27 cases in the database where intolerance occurred in the form of a social media post. Most of these are cases where someone made discriminatory remarks about Afro-Brazilian religions- accusing devotees of devil worship, witchcraft, child murder and cruelty to animals. In several instances, elected officials criticized Afro-Brazilian religions on their official pages. (Case #235, #316). There are also a few cases of online threats where Evangelical pastors posted videos encouraging their followers to attack “macumba centers” (derogatorily referring to Afro-Brazilian places of worship) (Case #166) or recorded themselves destroying Afro-Brazilian sacred objects (Case #287).

# HARASSMENT

There is a very broad category of cases in the database that have simply been labeled “harassment” for lack of more unifying terminology. These are cases where there has been some sort of verbal exchange or discrimination but no physical injury to any person or property and the intolerant words have not been published in written or audio-visual form. Some common themes across these cases include: 1) Protesting in front of terreiros, 2) harassing devotees in public, telling them that they are going to burn in hell and that Jesus will return, 3) trying to get devotees evicted, 4) calling the police for imagined crimes, 5) barring devotees from public spaces, and 6) writing threatening letters or posters.

Some of the more troubling cases of harassment deal with those instances where elderly practitioners and priests are denigrated in their homes/places of worship. The iconic example of this is Case #157. In 2014, an Evangelical church, Casa de Oração Ministério de Cristo, was built in Camaçari, Bahia across from the Candomblé temple run by 90-year-old priestess, Mildreles Dias Ferreira aka Mãe Dede de Iansã. Members of the church began to harass Mãe Dede and in mid-May of 2015, she filed a complaint with the police. Two weeks later, on May 30-31, the church held an overnight vigil outside the terreiro, shouting that Mãe Dede was a devil worshiper and a witch, and asking god to burn down her terreiro. Mãe Dede died of a heart attack during this vigil. Her family attributes her death to the stress of the vigil and the constant harassment that preceded it.

A prime example of this type of harassment was recently caught on video. On May 27, 2019 at 11:30pm, an Evangelical group of about 50 people gathered in front of Ilê Asé Oyá L’adê Inan in Alagoinhas (Bahia), with bibles in their hands, shouting phrases like , “Satan is going to fall,” “Satan is going to die,” and “Let’s summon Jesus to close Satan’s house,” as well as hitting a bible on the door of the terreiro. (Case #390)

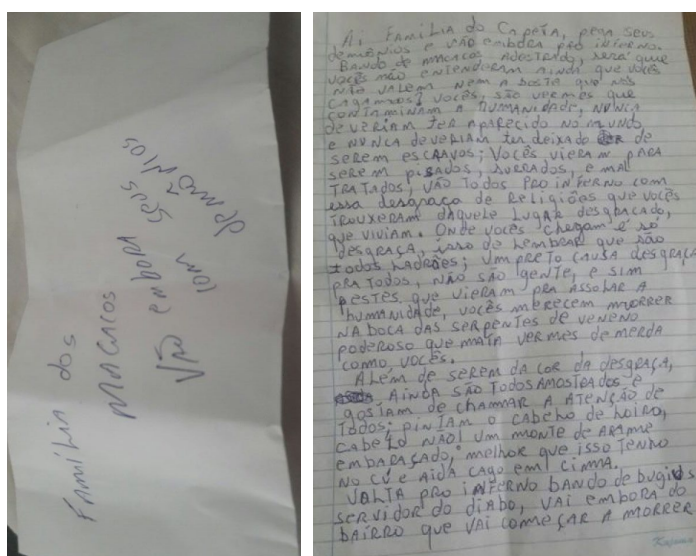


[Click on the photo above to watch the video](#)



# THREATS/ INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE

In April 2010, José Ricardo Mitidieri, an evangelical pastor and military sergeant in Rio de Janeiro, heard that Dhiego Cardoso Fernandes dos Santos (a soldier and Candomblé devotee) had said that he had a "closed body" (meaning that he was protected from evil). On April 8, 2010, Mitidieri pointed a gun at Dos Santos's head and asked if this claim that his deities would protect him was true. He ordered Dos Santos to count to three and then he would pull the trigger. Dos Santos never relented. Mitidieri lowered the gun but told Dos Santos that this wasn't a joke and that he needed to accept Jesus. Mitidieri was charged in a military court with "illegal embarrassment." He was sentenced to two months in prison. (Case #61)



Source (Photos Above): <https://www.geledes.org.br/fe-tem-cor-templo-religioso-resiste-racismo-apos-sofrer-ameacas/>

In September 2017, a Black lawyer, Marco Antônio André, who is also a practitioner of Candomblé, discovered a poster on a pole in front of his residence in Blumenau (Santa Catarina) that had a Ku Klux Klan image on it and it said "Black, communist, anti-facist and macumbeiro, we are watching you." André is a member of the NEAB (Nucleus of Afro-Brazilian Studies) at UDESC (State University of Santa Catarina) and had been working with the bar association's Truth Commission on Slavery in Brazil (Case #298)

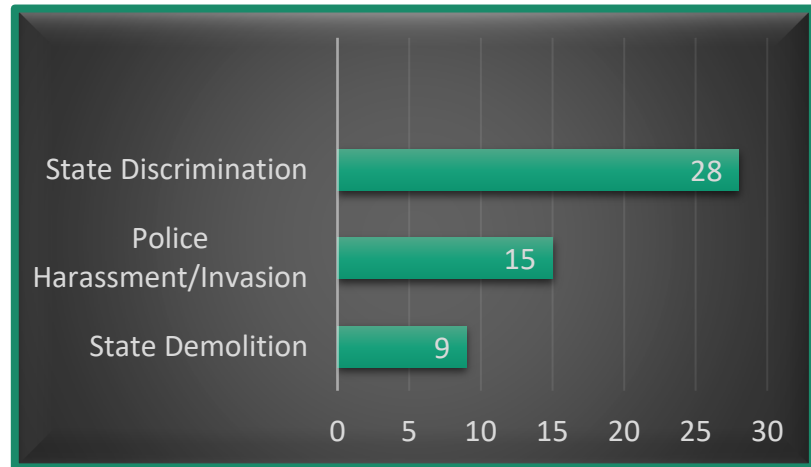
Source (Photo to the Right): <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1571873299518835&set=p.1571873299518835&type=3>

In Nov 2016, Ile Asè Osalá terreiro in São Carlos (São Paulo) received a hand written letter stating numerous racially and religiously discriminatory things. The envelope, pictured left, was addressed to "Family of Macaques (Monkeys)" and said "Get out of here with your demons." The text inside threatened that the worshippers would begin to die one by one and said that Black people never should have ceased to be slaves. The author referred to the members of the terreiro as "less than dogs" and told them to take their demons and go to hell. (Case #246)



# STATE INTOLERANCE

The category of State Intolerance encompasses every type of government action from any level of government. These 52 cases include perpetrators such as city halls, police officers, legislators, judges, and federal agencies. They are broken down into three categories: closing/demolition, discrimination, and police harassment/ invasion.



## STATE DISCRIMINATION

The 28 cases in this category range widely in terms of both the magnitude and form of state discrimination against Afro-Brazilian religions. On the more minute end of the scale, local governments have refused to let Afro-Brazilian priests participate in an official celebration of the founding of a city (Case #117), have intentionally given the space reserved for longstanding Afro-Brazilian festivals to Christian groups (case #80), or have put up a sign stating “this town belongs to Jesus” at the entrance to a city plagued by religious intolerance (Case #338). Below are two examples of the more extreme forms of state discrimination.

### Not Religions

In 2014, Federal Judge Eugenio Rosa de Araujo was asked to determine whether prejudiced videos about Afro-Brazilian faiths violated a law prohibiting discrimination against religions. Instead of evaluating the videos, the judge declared that the law did not apply because Afro-Brazilian faiths were not “religions.” His rationale was that “religions” must have a central text, a hierarchal structure and a singular concept of god. (Case #130)

### Bahia Bill

In 2019, Bahian legislator Isidório Filho introduced a bill that would invalidate or annul “every pact made with principalities, powers and other angels of the dark world” (presumably referring to Afro-Brazilian religions) and declare that the state of Bahia is under the “Protection and Supreme Spiritual Command of the Holy Trinity.” (Case #379)

# POLICE HARASSMENT/INVASION

There are 15 cases in the database where Afro-Brazilian places of worship have been invaded by police and devotees have suffered abuses or harassment at the hands of these officers. In one of these cases, a retired police officer led a physical attack on an Umbanda center in Minas Gerais (Case #240). Some of the remaining cases involve the invasion of terreiros following noise complaints (see page 32) and others are cases where police officers used excessive force in the alleged pursuit of suspected criminals. They have pointed guns at devotees and threatened to kill them, shot at terreiros, as well as caused property damage to the places of worship.

One of the most egregious cases occurred in October of 2010 at Ilê Axé Odé Omí Uá terreiro in Ilhéus, Bahia. Eight military police officers invaded the Dom Helder Câmara settlement. There was a religious ceremony going on at the time in the settlement's terreiro and around 50 families were present. The police claimed that they were looking for drugs and weapons that were supposedly hidden there. They held guns on the practitioners, allegedly to keep them from interfering. They also pepper-sprayed some of the devotees. At the time of the officers' entrance, the priestess, 42-year-old Bernadete de Souza, was possessed by the orixá Oxossi. The officers drug De Souza outside by her hair and threw her on top of an anthill. The police claimed that they acted so aggressively toward her because they were trying to get "Satan" to leave her body. They handcuffed De Souza, took her to the police station and placed her in a jail cell for male prisoners. (Case #065)

A similar case occurred in August 2017. Three military police officers broke through the door of Hunkpame Savalu Vodun Zo Kwe terreiro in Liberdade, Bahia, and went to the sacred part of the house (which people who are not members of the terreiro are not permitted to access). They were supposedly looking for drugs or suspects. They told the pai de santo to leave. When he responded that what they were doing was illegal, the police pointed a gun at him. (Case # 285)

Source (Photo to the Right):

<http://intoleranciareligiosadossie.blogspot.com/2017/09/se-fosse-uma-igreja-evangelica-eles.html>



In 2018, military police invaded Ilê Axé Torrun Gunan terreiro (Salvador, Bahia), purportedly looking for drug traffickers who they believed were hiding in the terreiro. They fired four shots, damaging the walls of this place of worship (See images to the left and below). They accused the practitioners of hiding the traffickers. They also threatened to shoot some of the devotees and arrested one of the priests who questioned the propriety of their invasion of the terreiro.

Source (Photos to the Left and Right):

<https://www.correio24horas.com.br/noticia/nid/pms-invadem-terreiro-atiram-contra-templo-e-prendem-oga-no-suburbio/>





# STATE CLOSING/DEMOLITION

The 9 cases in this category represent different forms of government demolition of Afro-Brazilian places of worship. These cases often center around issues of zoning– what spaces can be utilized for religious purposes or for “business”– or they relate to disputes about the private use of public lands. The status of these places of worship is often in dispute or in the process of being altered when the state officials close them down.

For example, in February 2008, several employees of the land use and control office of the municipality of Salvador partially destroyed Oyá Onipó Neto terreiro, on the grounds that it supposedly was located on public lands. The terreiro had been in existence for 28 years. The destruction occurred without warning and despite the fact that the owner, Mãe Rosa, had numerous documents showing her lawful possession of the land. (Case #31) (Photos Below)



Source (Photo Above):

<https://www.revistaforum.com.br/bmariafro-denuncia-destruicao-de-terreiro-em-salvador-pelo-poder-publico/>

Source (Photo to the Right):

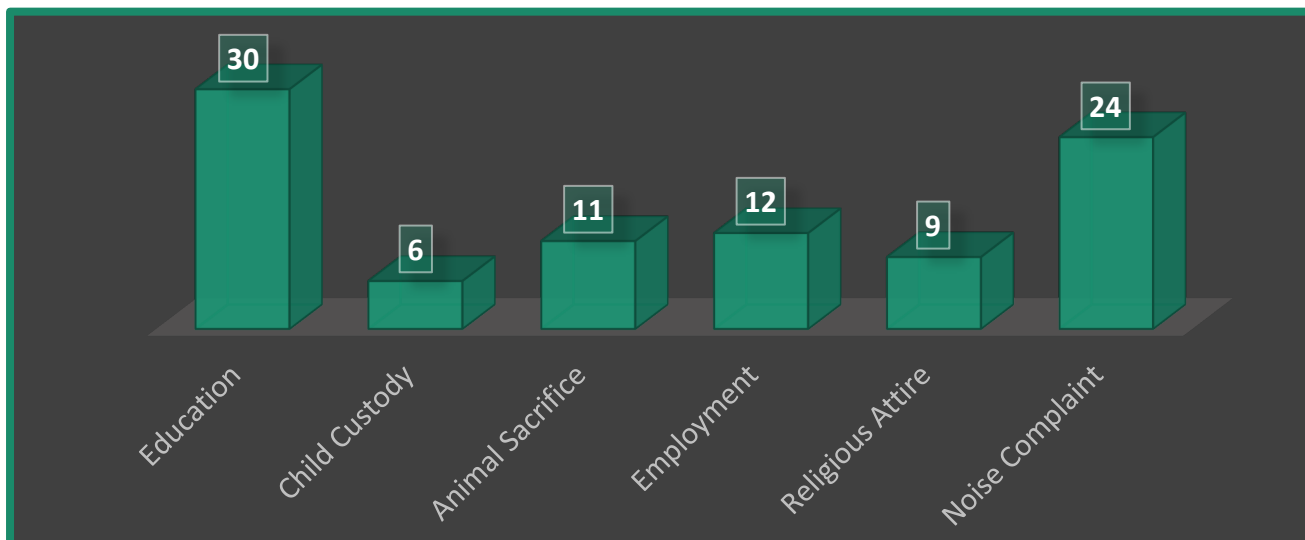
<http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Brasil/o..MUL353993-5598.00-DEMOLICAO+DE+TERREIRO+PROVOCA+POLEMICA+EM+SALVADOR.html>



Similarly, in 2009, the state demolished Vera Lúcia Chiodi's terreiro stating that it was on public lands. Mãe Vera pointed out that there were 50-60 properties on the same public lands, including some churches, and they were not demolished. Mãe Vera further emphasized that this demolition followed the passage of a law in 2006 that was supposed to legalize buildings on public lands, including various kinds of religious establishments. More than 1800 addresses were listed on the bill but Afro-Brazilian terreiros somehow disappeared from the final version. (Case #41)

The most recent example of state closing/demolition occurred in May 2019, when state inspectors summarily knocked down Caboclo Boiadeiro Candomblé terreiro in the Federal District, without giving any advance warning to the owners or the opportunity to remove sacred objects from the space. The government claims that the terreiro was an illegal installment. However, no one asked to see their paperwork. The terreiro owners had begun a process of "regularizing" the space. (Case #389)

# LEGAL RIGHTS CASES



There are 92 cases in the database that, rather than dealing with physical violence or verbal assaults, deal more directly with the violations of a person's rights. One third of these cases relate to the complex problems with achieving secularity and including Afro-Brazilian materials in the educational system. Many of these educational cases overlap with other categories of legal rights such as employment (of teachers) and religious attire.

## EDUCATION

There are a variety of different types of cases in which religious racism creates a hostile learning environment for devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions as well as for the study of Afro-Brazilian religion and culture; however, the majority of these cases fall into three categories: 1) discrimination against students, 2) student-on-student violence (discussed on page 20) and 3) discrimination against teachers.

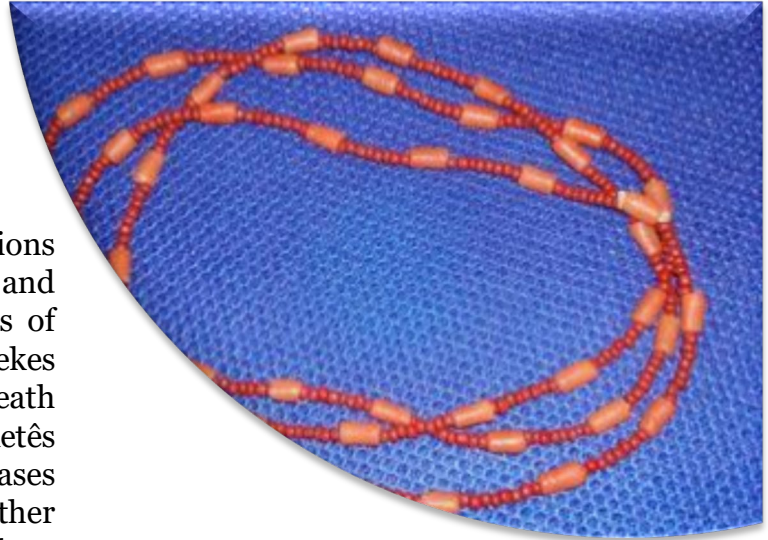
### Discrimination against Students

In several cases, teachers and administrators have expressed blatant disgust toward students who are devotees of Afro-Brazilian faiths. For example, in March 2012, a 15-year-old Candomblé devotee was a student at Escola Estadual Antonio Caputo in São Bernardo, São Paulo. (Case #89) His teacher harassed him, bringing a bible to class and beginning each day with a 20 minute session of preaching. Other students also bullied and harassed him. The boy was so bothered by these issues that he had trouble sleeping, lost his appetite, and developed facial tics. The following year, a 17-year-old Candomblé devotee suffered similar discrimination from his school principal. A teacher allegedly made negative remarks about the student's sexuality after the student placed his feet on a chair in the classroom (the student is gay). The situation was brought to the attention of the principal who then criticized the student for being a Candomblé adept and said that he should accept Jesus as his savior. The principal refused to allow the student to return to school the next day without a guardian and other students began a petition to get the student expelled. The student went 15 days without a classroom. His parents decided to remove him from this school because they feared for his safety. (Case #113).



# RELIGIOUS ATTIRE

Sometimes, devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions are prohibited entering schools, buses, and other public forums while wearing symbols of their faith such as white clothes, ilekes (protective necklaces usually worn underneath clothing), bracelets, head wraps, or eketês (protective hats). In many ways, these cases resemble those across the globe related to other types of religious attire in public spaces such as hijabs and veils.



Many of these cases involve students in secondary and university schools. For instance, in 2008, an Evangelical school teacher at Faetec (Campinhas, Rio de Janeiro) noticed that 14-year-old Felipe Gonçalves Pereira was wearing Candomblé ilekes under his uniform shirt. She called him a “son of the devil” before kicking him out of her class. (Case #35) In 2011, a Protestant school teacher similarly discriminated against a 13-year-old student. Like Pereira, this boy was wearing Candomblé ilekes underneath his uniform. His teacher called him “Satan” and told him to get out of her classroom; she did not let him return. She also encouraged other students to ignore the boy. The boy became so depressed that he failed that year of school. (Case #67) Most recently, in March 2019, a college student in Jataí (Goiás) had recently undergone initiation in Candomblé and had to wear special clothes (a long white skirt or dress and a head wrap). When she entered one of her classes in her religious attire, the professor told her that she was inappropriately dressed and she could not continue to attend class in those clothes. She tried to explain her religion and why she was wearing these clothes but the professor continued to harass her. (Case # 374)

Other cases deal with adults trying to navigate public spaces in their religious garb. For example, in March 2015, Herácliton dos Santos Barbosa (aka Táta Luangomina) tried to enter Fórum Odilon Santos in Santo Amaro, Bahia but a court officer prohibited him from doing so because he was wearing an eketê. Barbosa was a student at UNILAB (Universidade da Integração da Lusofonia Afro Brasileira) and he wanted to lease a property so he had to submit copies of documents showing the financial aid that he received from the university. He took off the eketê briefly to prove to the officer that he was not concealing weapons, drugs, or any other prohibited item. However, the officer still refused to let him in. Barbosa asked to speak to the judge to request special approval to wear his eketê but the officer instead grabbed him by the neck and arm, and physically removed him from the forum. (Case #152)

A more overt case of religious discrimination occurred in July 2016. Fabiana Figueiredo de Souza was a recent initiate into Candomblé and was wearing all white. She was trying to get on a bus in Rio de Janeiro (Line 39, Marambaia - Coroadó) at 12:40pm. The bus clearly said on its sign that it was going to the destination that she desired. However, the driver insisted that he was not going that far. As she got down off the steps of the bus, Fabiana’s sister heard the driver say that he would not transport a “macumbeira.” (Case #228)



# EMPLOYMENT

There are 12 cases in the database in which employers have fired, reassigned or otherwise discriminated against devotees of African diaspora religions. Half of these cases involve teachers.

## Discrimination against Teachers

Over the last several years, conservative students have increasingly tried to erase Afro-Brazilian history and culture from the curriculum by simply refusing to complete assignments or attend classes on these subjects, and seeking the removal of teachers who support these materials. Most of these cases are incidents where the victim is a teacher whose religious affiliation is unknown. The attack is against the materials or curriculum rather than the person who is teaching it. The database contains at least five cases that fit this profile.

The first case is that of Maria Cristina Marques, who was a literature professor at Municipal School Pedro Adami in Macaé, Rio de Janeiro in 2009. She used a book about Afro-Brazilian Deities called *Legends of Exu* to teach grammar skills. This book was recommended by the Ministry of Education. However, after Marques used it, she was banned from teaching and some of the mothers of her Evangelical students accused her of being a devil sympathizer and of teaching materials that spoke about selling children's organs. (Case #51) That same year, public school teacher Francisco Albuquerque Santo Filho organized an event in honor of Brazil's National Day of Black Consciousness at Centro Educacional No. 4 de Taguatinga. He wanted his students to perform Candomblé dances as part of the event because he argued that religion was an important part of how Africans organized themselves in early Brazil. However, Evangelical and Catholic students refused to learn the dances, averring that he was forcing them to practice Candomblé. As a result of this dispute, he was reassigned to a different school and subject to an investigation. (Case #54) In 2012, Raimunda Nonata Freitas, a teacher at Escola Estadual Senador João Bosco in Manaus, Amazonas, faced similar pushback when he assigned a project on Candomblé. Thirteen Evangelical students refused to do the project and instead made up their own project on Christian missions/missionaries in Africa. (Case #101) The most recent case occurred in September 2019. Roberto Freire, then-president of Cidadania (a political party) reports that Evangelical students studying "sacred repertoires" in the School of Music at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro refuse to study Afro-Brazilian sacred repertoires as a part of the curriculum. (Case # 417)

## Other Employment Cases

The employment cases that are unrelated to education reflect a wide range of circumstances. One of the purported victims claims that his manager made derogatory comments about him "doing witchcraft" in front of other employees. (Case #252) The remaining cases are employees who were fired from their positions after revealing their religious affiliation. For example, in 2017, Daniela Nayara de Brito was terminated after asking for a vacation to undergo initiation into Candomblé. (Case #289). Patric Ferreira (2016) and Jacqueline Martins (2018) were fired after wearing all-white attire to work (a symbol of Afro-Brazilian religions). (Case #223 & 342) All of these employers cited other official reasons for terminating employment— tardiness, missed work, customer complaints, reducing expenses— but the timing of their decisions suggests that religious intolerance was the real motive.

## ANIMAL SACRIFICE



## CHILD CUSTODY

Laws restricting the ritual slaughter of animals often form the backdrop to intolerance against minority religions. Somewhat similar to kosher and halal slaughter, some Afro-Brazilian religious communities ritually slaughter animals and then (typically) distribute the meat for food. The database includes 11 cases in which local and state legislators attempted to suppress Afro-Brazilian faiths by banning animal sacrifice. These legislators have referred to the ritual slaughter of animals as barbarity, cruelty, and a threat to public health. They have sought to impose significant fines of more than R\$1500 per animal. (Case #63, 261)

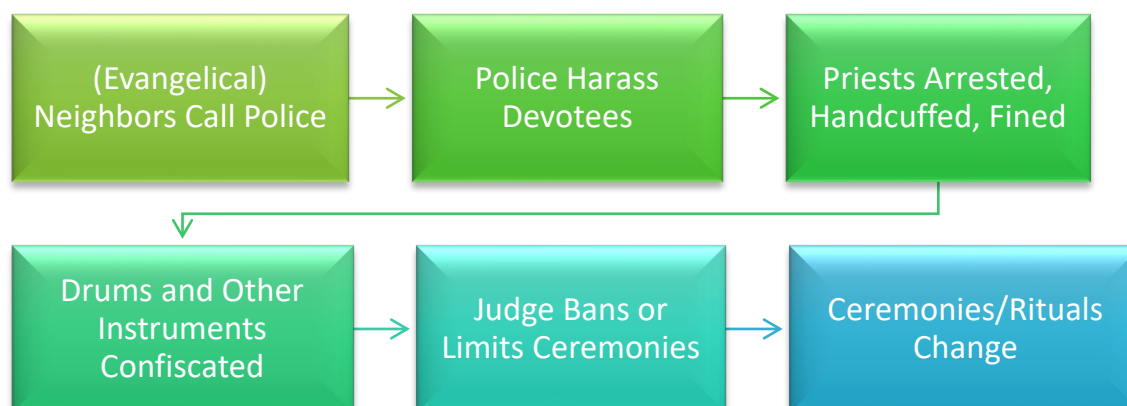
These cases must be read in their larger context, which undermine the purported concern for animal welfare. First, all these laws have been proposed in the last 12 years, amidst the rapid rise of physical violence against Afro-Brazilian religions. Second, these laws are often introduced by staunchly Christian legislators or groups. For instance, one of the most severe laws, passed by the municipality of Piracicaba, was initially drafted by a political group called the "Alliance for Christian Supremacy." (Case # 63) Third, the actions of the proponents do not demonstrate consistent concern for animal rights. For example, Feliciano Filho, who introduced a bill to the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo in 2011 that would directly prohibit the "use of the sacrifice of animals in religious rituals," was himself arrested for animal cruelty three years later. (Case #75)

There are currently 6 cases involving child custody in the Religious Racism database. The scarcity of these records does not indicate their frequency but rather reflects that these cases are challenging to uncover. Brazil, like most countries, has some limitations on access to cases involving minors and it is difficult to search for records of these proceedings. However, the Commission to Combat Religious Intolerance published two reports of devotees who lost custody of their young children in 2007 (Case #27) and 2009 (Case #40) solely because of their religious affiliation.

A third case regarding child custody involves an eleven-year-old girl, "L" who was undergoing a ritual to improve her health at Ilê Axé Oxalá Tababy terreiro in 2010. The tutelary council and the military police visited the terreiro, claiming that they had heard rumors that the child would be sacrificed in a black magic ritual. Even after seeing that the child was well and receiving proof that her parents had authorized the ritual, the council members continued to harass L's mother. The leader of the terreiro called a lawyer for assistance; meanwhile, the council filed a complaint with the juvenile court. The judge sided with the terreiro and L's family; however this case illustrates the multi-faceted concerns related to child custody and the rights of devotees of Afro-Brazilian faiths. (Case #62)

Unfortunately, during the Covid-19 pandemic, these cases became more common. The other three cases took place in 2020-2021.

# NOISE COMPLAINTS



There are 24 cases involving noise complaints listed in the Religious Racism database. In general, these cases follow a pattern that one can see described in the chart above.

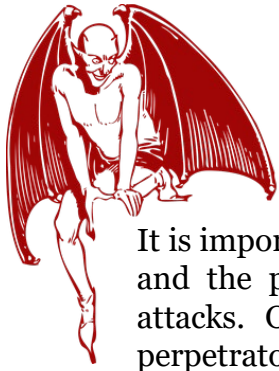
First, neighbors file a complaint with the police about excessive noise at an Afro-Brazilian place of worship. In some circumstances, one can only speculate about the neighbors' underlying motives for issuing these complaints. In other cases; however, official documentation reveals that the complainants are all Evangelicals (i.e. Case #106). In such circumstances, noise complaints may serve as another method of eradicating Afro-Brazilian religions from the community.

When the police respond to these complaints, they frequently halt religious ceremonies and harass practitioners. For instance, in the case of Terreiro Vó Maria de Aruanda in São Paulo, the officers took down the names and license plate numbers of all the attendees at a ceremony (Case #250). In several instances, the officers have handcuffed and arrested the priests (Case #90; #207; #344). Police have also seized drums and other musical instruments when they arrive to investigate these complaints. (Case #207, #344) This is particularly disturbing given the long history of criminalization of Afro-Brazilian religions in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the common practice of state authorities (including police) seizing and/or destroying musical and ritual instruments during that time.

The sentences related to these cases have become increasingly harsh and restrictive on religious practice. First, several cases demonstrate that judges are sentencing priests/religious leaders to terms of imprisonment for merely violating noise ordinances. (Case #229; #257) They are also limiting the hours during which religious communities are permitted to play drums and other musical instruments, as well as restricting the number of drums that can be used and the decibels at which they can be played. (Case #229; #270) In other cases, complainants and courts have even tried to prevent the use of drums or the holding of religious ceremonies altogether. (Case #73; #402)

Devotees in Brazil have expressed concern about the long-term impact of these cases on religious practices. Both direct limitations on ceremonial practices issued by Brazilian courts as well as general threat of arrest and prosecution have led concerned communities to alter or abandon religious musical traditions such as playing drums, singing, and even clapping.





# MACUMBA, DEVILS & DEMONS

It is important to not only to reflect on the types of religious intolerance, the victims, and the perpetrators, but also to explore the motivating factors leading to the attacks. One of the common themes across many types of cases is that the perpetrators employ language of "macumba," devil worship, and demons at some point during the attack.

**Devils and Demons:** Afro-Brazilian religions have no notion of an ultimate evil that corresponds to the Christian devil. Nevertheless, in approximately 11% of the cases in the database, the attackers referred to the victims as devil or demon worshippers. For example, in the cases where teachers discriminated against students wearing symbols of Candomblé, they often referred to the children as sons or daughters of the devil (Case #67). Similarly, in public spaces such as supermarkets and other stores, employees have often harassed devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions, asking them what demons they serve or offering to cast the demons out of their body (Case #116, 179, 192, 209). Furthermore, as perpetrators carry out acts of property destruction against Afro-Brazilian places of worship, they frequently declare their desire to cast out Satan.

**Macumba:** The language of "macumba" is connected to the idea of devil worship or demons; however, this term is unique to Brazil and specifically derides Afro-Brazilian religions. It is probably best translated as "sorcery" or "black magic," but there is a particularly racialized intent behind this term. One could compare the use of "macumba" in Brazil to the way in which "voodoo" is often used in the English-speaking world. Similar to the language about devils and demons, "macumba" accuses the victim of a form of spiritual wrong-doing. However, "macumba" appears to be deployed more frequently in situations of violence against devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions. For example, in several cases where we have specific information about Evangelical drug traffickers evicting Afro-Brazilian religions from their territories, the traffickers announced that they would not permit "macumba" in the area (Case #18, 38, 57, 293, 394). Similarly, in several cases, Evangelical pastors have openly called upon their followers to commit violence against Afro-Brazilian religions, asking them to expel "macumba" from the region (Case #166, 236). This language of "macumba" also appears in several physical assault cases. When classmates repeatedly assaulted 16-year-old Isadora Jaques Leão (cases #217, 218, 220), they called her a "macumbeira." In 2018, when a neighbor tried to kill a pai de santo in Manaus, he shouted about needing to end the "macumba" going on next door (Case #320).

**Frequency:** In more than 22% of the cases in the database (114 cases), the attackers use language about devils, demons, black magic, and/or "macumba." This figure becomes even more significant when one considers that the perpetrators are unknown in 186 cases. With the exception of a few instances where written threats or vandalism include references to "macumba" or devil worship, the cases that use this language are those in which the victim has had personal interactions with the perpetrator. Therefore, it is also significant that this language is used in approximately one-third of cases in which the perpetrator is known.

# THE ENVIRONMENT AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

The environment plays an important role in cases of religious racism in Brazil. In several cases in the database, the perpetrators attempt to justify their acts of intolerance (i.e. – destroying offerings or preventing devotees from leaving offerings in nature) by stating that their concern is that the devotee is polluting the natural environment (Case #42; 125; 201) One should think about this as an extension of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century arguments that Afro-Brazilian religions must be criminalized because they threatened public health and morality.

Ironically, Afro-Brazilian terreiros often represent some of the only remaining green spaces in increasingly industrialized Brazilian cities. In many instances, we can see attackers targeting sacred trees and plants as part of their destruction of Afro-Brazilian places of worship. For example, in Salvador, Bahia, there is a sacred heritage site for Afro-Brazilian devotees known as Pedra de Xangô (the Xangô stone). The stone is estimated to be around two billion years old. In November 2014, vandals dumped 200 kilos of cooking salt and plastic bags on the site (Case #142). In December 2018, this monument was vandalized for a second time-- covered in approximately 100 kilos of salt. (Case #363) Only three days later, in January 2019, the site was vandalized a third time with a smaller amount of salt. (Case #365)

Local religious communities suspect that Evangelicals were behind the attacks on this site because Evangelicals commonly believe that salt has the power to burn and purify. Afro-Brazilian religious communities viewed this as a particular attack on the orixá Xangô because he is associated with fire and salt is something that extinguishes fire. It is also an environmental crime because salt is destructive to the soil and prevents most plants from growing.



Source: <https://www.correio24horas.com.br/noticia/nid/ministerio-publico-vai-ser-chamado-para-intervir-em-agressao-a-pedra-de-xango/>



# THE ENVIRONMENT AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

In addition to the vandalism of Pedra de Xangô, there have been numerous environmental attacks on Afro-Brazilian sacred landscapes. For instance, in 2010, Ademir Oliveira dos Passos, a lawyer in Cachoeira (Bahia), wanted to build 110 luxury condominiums. To make way for these condos, he destroyed 14 hectares of green space of Roça do Ventura terreiro's land including the lagoon and many of the trees on the property. The destruction of this site is particularly egregious because the terreiro was founded on that land in 1858 and was the first in Brazil for the "Jeje Mahin" nation, so it has great historical as well as religious significance. (Case #59)

Similarly, in December 2018, unknown persons used tractors and bulldozers to destroy three thousand square meters of sacred green space belonging to Terreiro Húnpame Karè Lewí Xwè in Cajazeiras (Bahia). They destroyed coconut and cinnamon trees, as well as ritual tools and representations of the orixás where devotees left their offerings (Case #359) The massive destruction can be seen in the photo to the right.



Source (Photo Above):

<https://www.geledes.org.br/tratores-invadem-e-destroem-area-verde-de-terreiro-em-cajazeiras-iv/>

Around the same time period, in November 2018, a sacred tree in Recife (Pernambuco) mysteriously caught fire. The tree is over 130 years old and is located on the lands of Ilê Obá

Ogunté Sítio de Pai Adão terreiro. The government had recognized this terreiro as a cultural heritage site just two months before the fire. It is one of the oldest terreiros in Pernambuco. The City Hall Environmental Brigade investigated the fire (pictured below right) and determined that this was likely a case of arson. However, they were not able to identify the culprits and one can only speculate whether it was an intentional act of intolerance or mere carelessness.

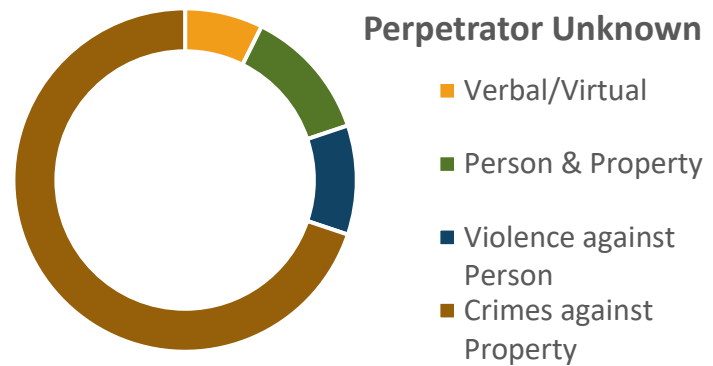


Source: (Photos Above): <https://jconline.ne10.uol.com.br/canal/cidades/geral/noticia/2018/11/11/moradores-denunciam-incendio-em-arvore-sagrada-do-terreiro-de-pai-adao-em-agua-fria-361618.php>

# THE PERPETRATORS

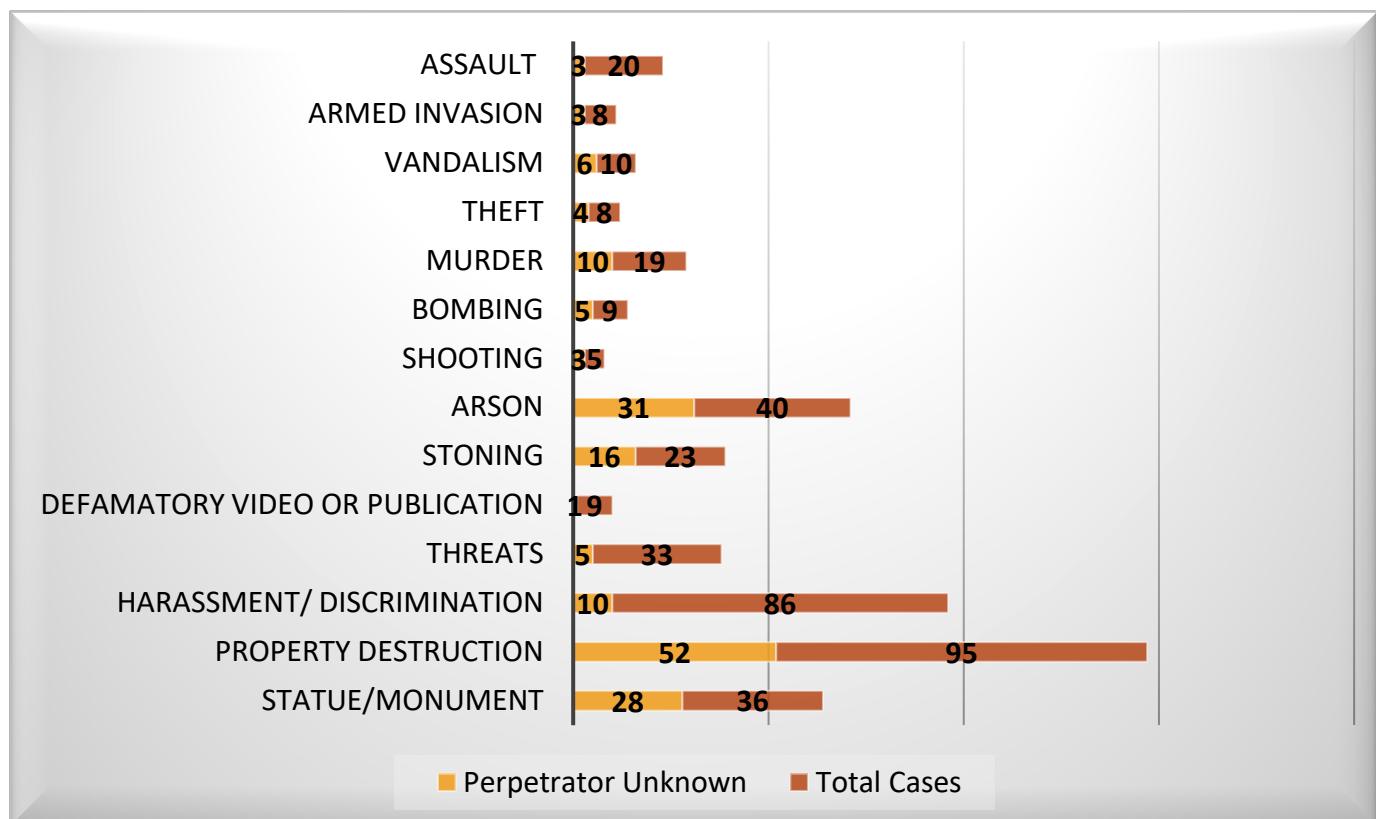
One of the challenges of studying religious racism in Brazil is that the perpetrators of intolerance are rarely identified. Of the 500 cases in the database, the perpetrator has not been identified in 187 cases (37%). When a perpetrator was unidentified in a public report, that typically means that they were never located by the authorities and thus never prosecuted. Therefore, this figure highlights the very real problem of unchecked assaults on Afro-Brazilian faiths.

Of these 187 cases in which the attacker is unknown, more than 73% are crimes against property. Therefore, property crimes, which comprise only 43% of the database, are greatly overrepresented in the number of unsolved crimes. These include: property destruction (52 cases), arson (31 cases), stoning (16 cases), statue/monument (28 cases) and theft (4 cases). The perpetrators in violence against person and property cases



(robbery, explosive devices, trafficker evictions, and armed invasions) were also rarely identified. With the exception of murder cases, the victims could usually identify their perpetrators in person-to-person intolerance (both physical and verbal). However, this does not mean that the perpetrators were held accountable.

The chart below provides a more detailed breakdown of the percentage of cases in which the perpetrator is known for each type of intolerance.





# RELIGION OF THE PERPETRATORS

According to Census statistics, Protestants are approximately 22% of the population of Brazil. (Chart #1) However, according to a study published in 2015,<sup>1</sup> Protestants are approximately 62% of the known perpetrators of all acts of religious intolerance in Brazil. (Chart #2)

These figures becomes more startling when we look at the Religious Racism database and focus on the perpetrators of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions. In the database, the religion of the perpetrators is known in 206 of 500 cases (41%) In 45 cases, the perpetrator of the intolerance was either the state or a company; therefore, the religion of the perpetrator was deemed “not applicable.” In another 12 cases, the act of intolerance was carried out by a group of people who may have had multiple religious affiliations.

Of the remaining cases, **100% of the perpetrators were Christians.** Sixteen percent could be generally identified as Christian through rhetoric or explicit reports. The attacker in another case was identified as Protestant but there was no information about what sect or type of Protestantism. (Chart #3)

**Evangelical Christians** were the perpetrators in at least **80% of the cases** in which the perpetrators were a person (not a company or government official) whose religious affiliation was known. (Chart #3)

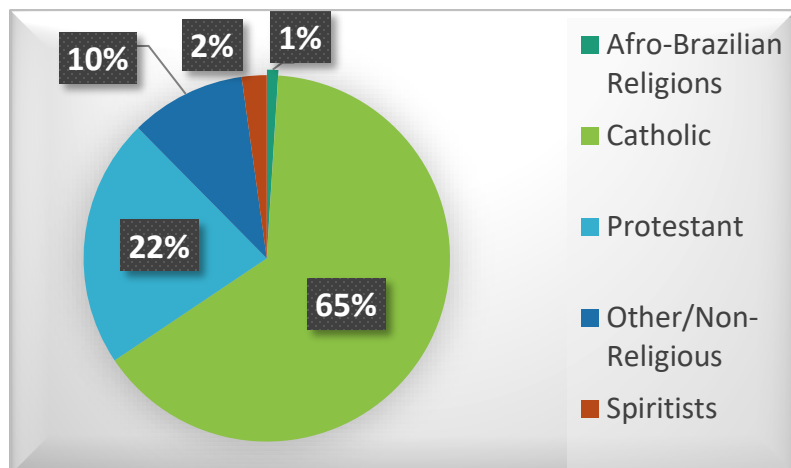


Chart #1: Religious Affiliation in Brazil

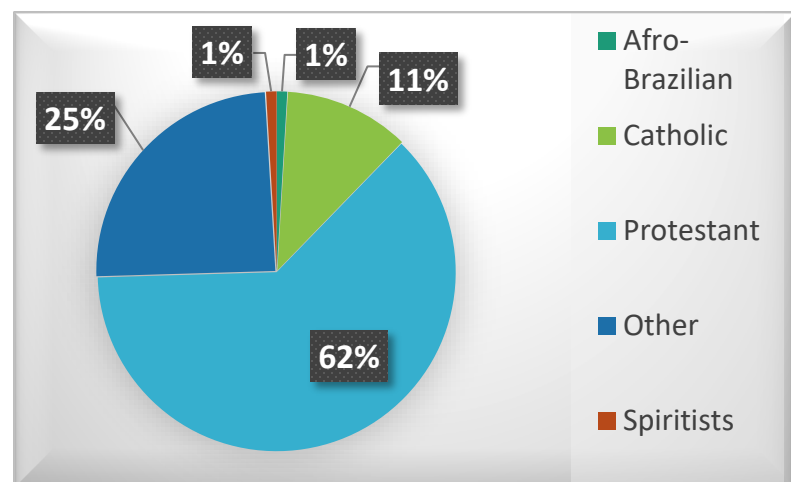


Chart #2: Religion of the Perpetrators: Relatório de Intolerância e Violência Religiosa”

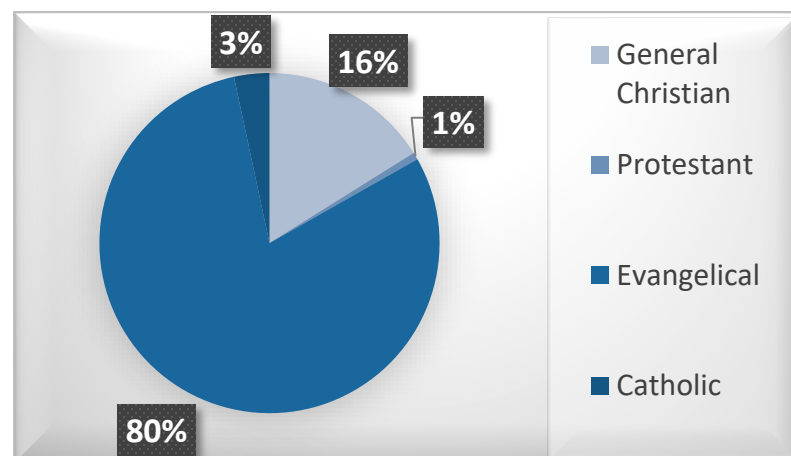


Chart #3: Perpetrators: The Religious Racism Database

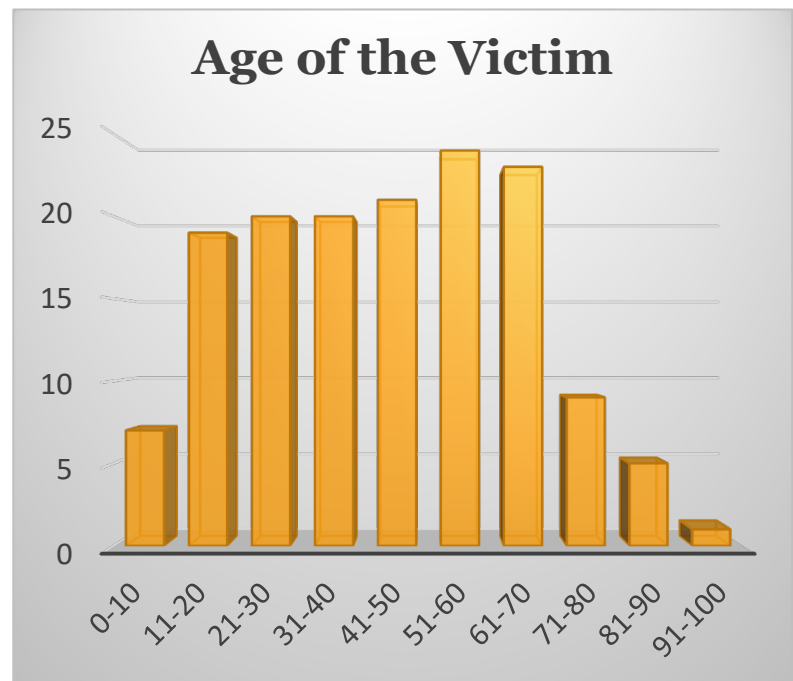
1. Comitê Nacional de Respeito à Diversidade Religiosa, “Relatório de Intolerância e Violência Religiosa,” (2015), <http://www.mdh.gov.br/informacao-ao-cidadao/participacao-social/cnrdr/pdfs/relatorio-de-intolerancia-e-violencia-religiosa-rivir-2015/view>

# PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS: AGE

Many of the media reports of religious racism in Brazil include harassment and violent assaults against elders (people over the age of 60). Due to the shocking nature of some of these attacks, it seemed important to include the age of the victims in the database. Where the victim was a place of worship or religious community, the age of the leader of the community or owner of the place of worship was used to measure this data.

Despite initial impressions, the available data showed the smallest number of cases were against elderly people. Individuals under the age of 30 comprised 32% of cases in which the victims age was known, individuals between 31 and 60 years of age comprised 45%, and persons over the age of 60 comprised 27%. The table below shows a more detailed breakdown.

However, there is also considerable room for error in interpreting this data. In nearly half of the cases (219), the age of the victim was unknown. An additional 45 cases involved multiple victims whose individual ages were not reported. In 94 cases, this category was not applicable because the target of the intolerance was an entire religion (i.e.- discriminatory publications about Afro-Brazilian faiths or laws targeting animal sacrifice) or a property that did not belong to any individual person (i.e.- statues and monuments). Therefore, only approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cases provided information for the assessment of the age of the victims.



Additionally, this data has a different meaning when it is compared to overall statistics on religious intolerance in Brazil. According to Disque 100 records, the age of the victim was unknown in 25% of cases of religious intolerance in the five-year period between 2014 and 2018. Of the remaining reports, persons between the ages of 31-60 were more than half (51%), persons age 30 and under were 37% and persons 61 and older comprised a mere 11%. This suggests that persons over age 60 are disproportionately the victims of religious intolerance against Afro Brazilian faiths. This is an important area for additional research.

Not surprisingly, the database records show that nearly all of the cases involving people under the age of 20 took place in schools and involved some sort of educational discrimination. By contrast, the vast majority of cases involving people over the age of 60 took place in the victim's home, community or place of worship. These cases typically involved verbal harassment, property destruction and/or stoning of the victim's home or place of worship.

# PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS: GENDER

The gender of the victim is also an important inquiry in cases of religious intolerance. Some Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé have a long history of female leadership. Therefore, one would expect that gender would play an important role in religious racism.

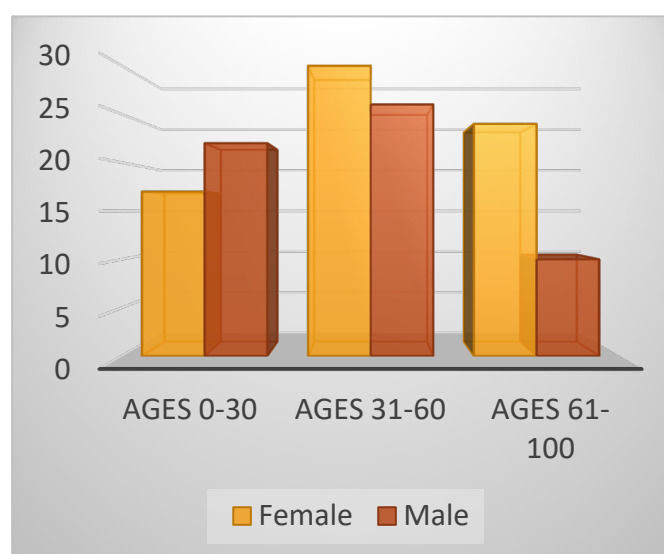
General statistics about overall cases in the database do not reflect these assumptions.<sup>1</sup> Gender was both known and an applicable category in 312 cases (62%).<sup>2</sup> Of these cases, 50% of the victims were female and 50% of the victims were male. These figures seem to contradict historical overrepresentation of female leadership in some Afro-Brazilian religions. They are also shocking when contrasted against the Disque 100 records, which show that females were a slight majority (54%) of overall victims of religious intolerance between 2014 and 2018.

## Gender and Types of Intolerance

Although the gender of the victims across all cases in the database was a near even split, there were significant gender disparities in the victims of certain types of intolerance. First and foremost, in all of the cases of murder or attempted murder, the victims were male. In some cases, the victims were also homosexual. Therefore, there seems to be an intersection of gender and sexual orientation in these most severe forms of violence against persons. Nearly all of the noise complaints were also against terreiros run by males and all of the priests who were handcuffed and jailed for these noise violations were men. The opposite is true of stoning cases; 79% of the terreiros stoned were run by women. There is a need for additional research to explore how and why religious racism is gendered.

## The Intersection of Age & Gender

We have information on both the age and the gender of the victims in approximately 25% of all cases. The intersection of these categories leads to some important disparities. While the overall gender of the victims in the database is an even split between male and female, this is not true across all age groups. As the chart to the right shows, for persons age 61 and older, the victim was more than twice as likely to be female than male. Stated differently, 17% of male victims are age 61 or older, while 33% of female victims are age 61 or older.



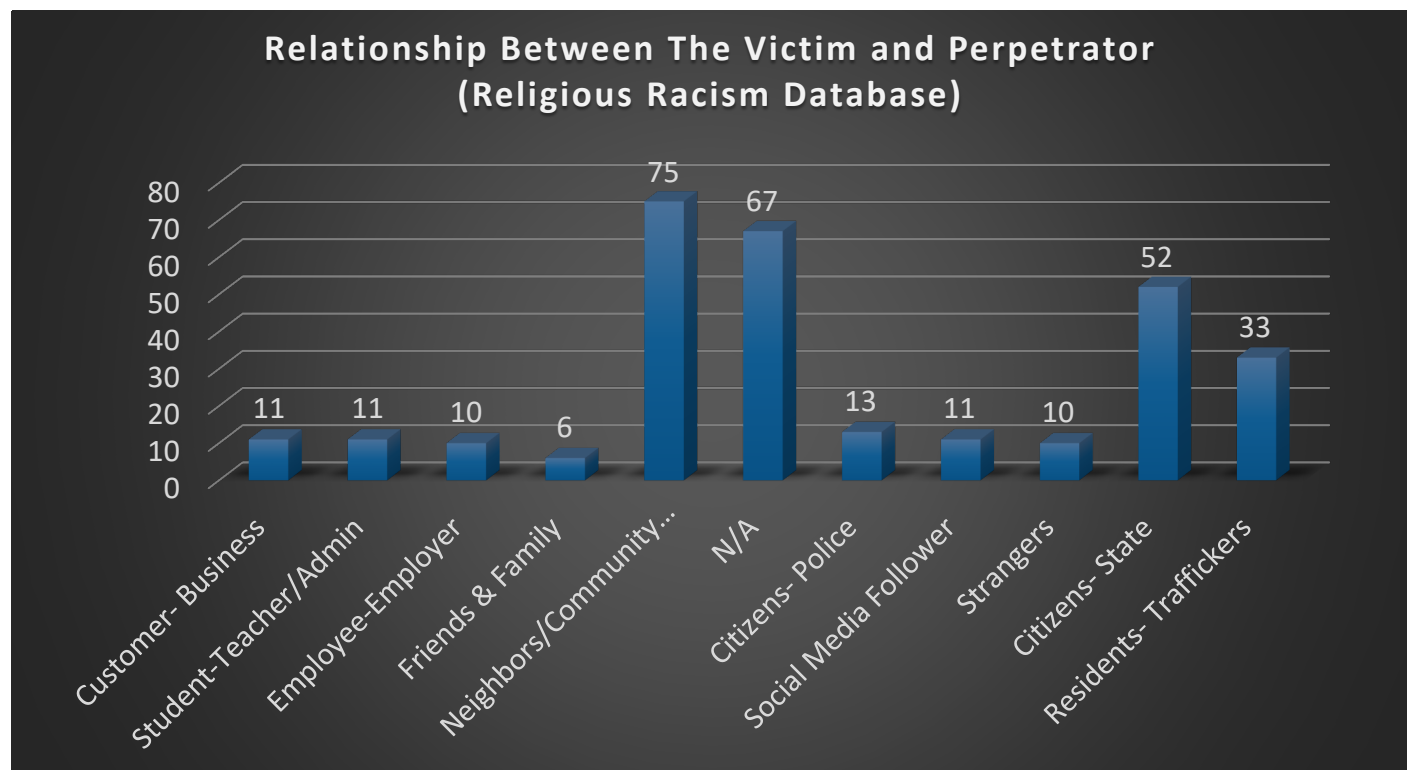
1. The same method to determine gender was used as that with determinations of age. Where the victim was a place of worship or religious community, the age of the leader of the community or owner of the place of worship was used to measure this data.
2. Gender was unknown in 63 cases. In an additional 32 cases, there were multiple victims and the gender of each was not reported. Therefore, gender data is not available in 19% of the cases. In 92 cases (18.4%), the target of the intolerance was an entire religion (i.e.- discriminatory publications about Afro-Brazilian faiths or laws targeting animal sacrifice) or a property that did not belong to any individual person (i.e.- statues and monuments).

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VICTIM AND THE PERPETRATOR

Understanding the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is a key component of unraveling the reasons for the rampant intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions. The Religious Racism database contains information about the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator in 258 cases.<sup>1</sup> Of these cases, nearly one-third (75 cases) of the victims and perpetrators were neighbors or members of the same residential community. One could argue that drug trafficker evictions are also occurring among “neighbors” or members of the same community; and the inclusion of these cases would bring the figure to 42% of cases. The majority of the remaining cases are split between student-teacher/administrator, employer-employee, and business- patron. Few cases are among strangers or family and friends.

In some ways, the Religious Racism database corresponds with the Disque 100 records; however, the categories and data sets are slightly different. Disque 100 does not list police officers or the state as possible perpetrators. Additionally, they do not appear to include general discrimination against religious communities (i.e.- derogatory videos) or attacks on statues/monuments in their data. Possible relationships include neighbors, employer-employee, family members, romantic partners and related categories.

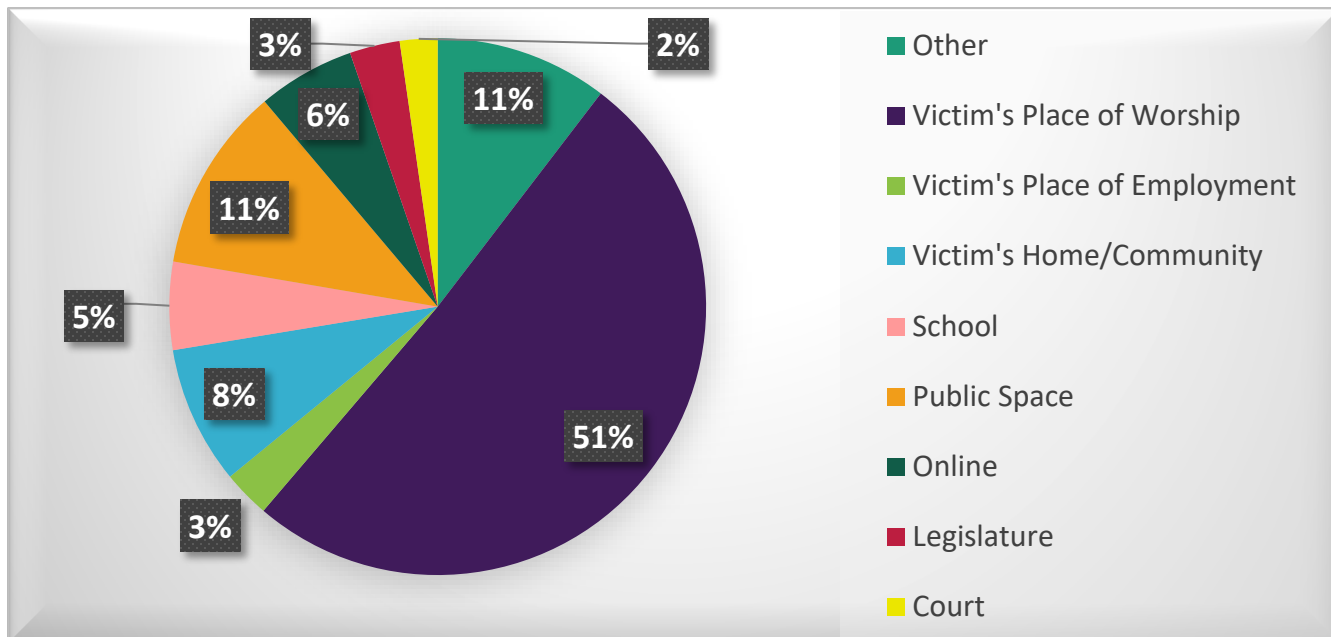
According to Disque 100 records, between 2014 and 2018, neighbors were 42.8% of the known relationships between victims and attackers in cases of religious intolerance in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Strangers was the next most common category, representing 14.6% of known relationships. The remaining disputes were primarily among family members.



1. The majority of those cases in which no information was available (175 cases) were incidents where the perpetrator had not been identified. In another 63 cases, this category was not applicable because the victim was not a natural person (i.e.- statue/monument).
2. More than 42% of the relationships were unknown for this period.



# LOCATION OF ATTACKS



Approximately half of all cases of religious racism are taking place at the victim's place of worship. This is explained by the frequent violence against places of worship discussed earlier in this report. Acts of stoning, arson, property destruction, vandalism, robbery, armed invasion and use of incendiary devices all typically take place in Afro-Brazilian terreiros.

Cases in the victim's home or community comprised another 8% of cases. The majority of these were cases of violence against persons- murder, shooting, physical assault and stoning. Combined, these sites represent nearly 60% of all cases and the majority of reports of physical violence. This data shows the urgent need for state mechanisms to protect devotees where they live and worship.

Following the victim's place of worship, the most common site of religious intolerance was a public space. Approximately half of these cases are attacks on statues or monuments; the remainder are primarily harassment and physical assault of devotees.

Approximately 5% of cases occurred in schools, which reflects cases involving religious attire, physical assaults and harassment of students as well as teachers being fired or reassigned for teaching materials on Afro-Brazilian religions.

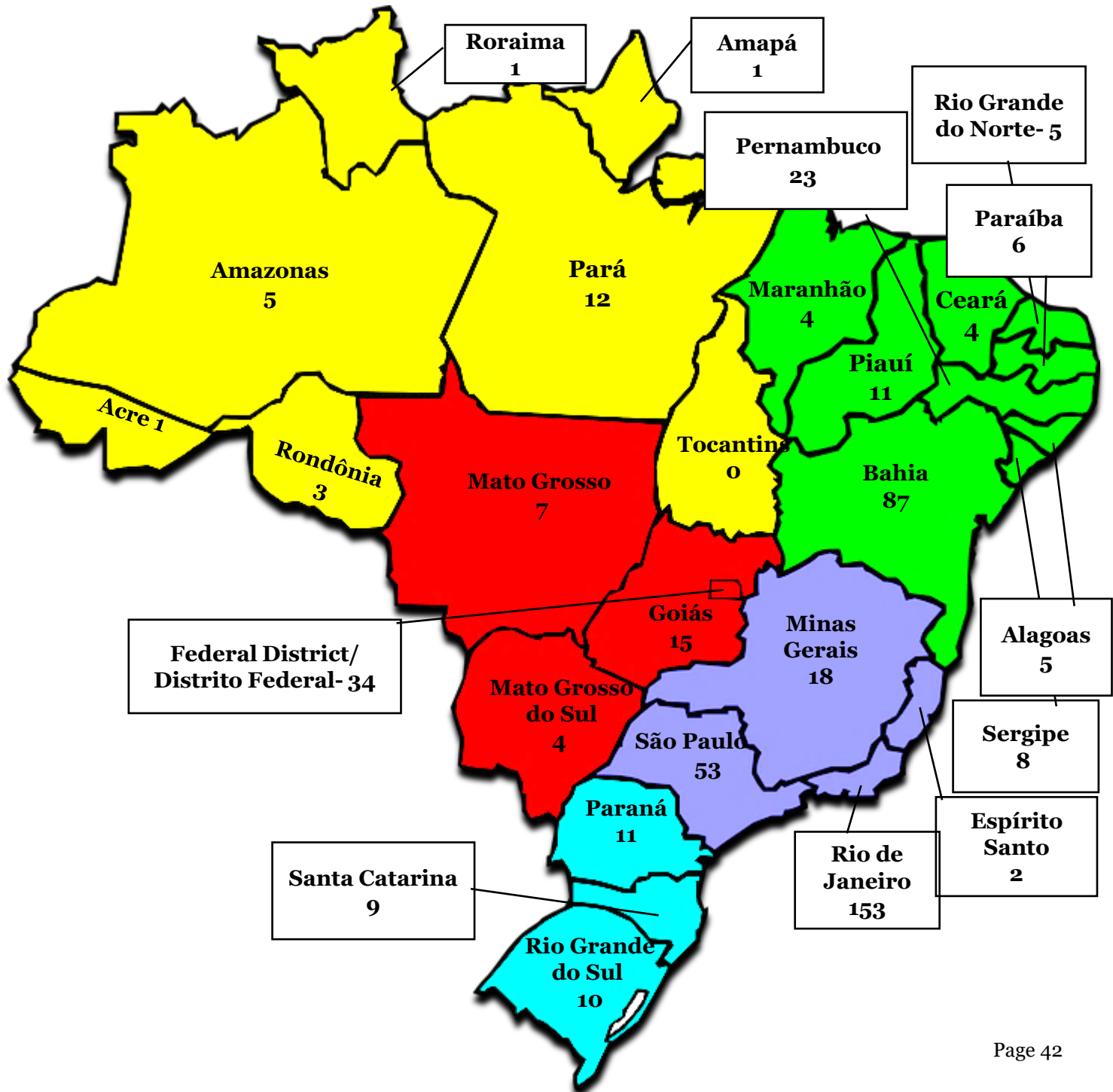
Small percentages of cases occurred in the victim's place of employment or involved legal rights of devotees that were debated in the legislature or courts. The remaining cases were either online or combined into the broad category of "other," which includes a variety of spaces such as an airport, bar, cemetery, church, forest, restaurant, supermarket, or public bus.

The Religious Racism Database is more tailored to understanding the location of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions than government reports. Disque 100 records, for example, provide the location of intolerance but they do not list Afro-Brazilian places of worship as a distinct category of location. "Church" (Igreja) is listed as a category; however, it would be unusual for this word to encompass Afro-Brazilian places of worship and the small percentage of cases reported in these spaces make such a broad interpretation of "church" unlikely. It is likely that terreiros are merely listed as "other" in these records. However, nearly a third of cases reported to Disque 100 occurred in the victim's home, which reinforces the idea that intolerance is occurring in the victim's community.

# LOCATION OF ATTACKS

Although the reports in the database do not provide the full picture of religious racism, they can give some sense of where some of the areas of greatest concern might be. The highest number of cases were reported in Rio de Janeiro, representing 31% of the reports in the database. This reflects the rise of Evangelized traffickers and the rampant destruction of Afro-Brazilian places of worship in the state. Bahia, the notorious cradle of Afro-Brazilian culture, is second with 17% of cases.

One should also note the great disparities in terms of region. The Southeast Region of Brazil (Purple) had the largest number of cases (226), followed by the Northeast Region (Green) with 149 cases. By contrast, the three states in the South Region (blue) had a mere 30 cases.



# HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The rampant religious racism in Brazil has broad implications for the country's international human rights obligations that need to be further reviewed.

Terrorism	Genocide
<p data-bbox="245 546 877 693">There is no universal definition of terrorism; however, a combination of several treaties and national definitions share the following basic criteria:</p> <ul data-bbox="245 723 877 1182" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="245 723 877 838">• An intentional or premediated action that targets a government, a group of people or the general population</li><li data-bbox="245 838 877 952">• Targets are non-combatants and perpetrators are acting outside of declared armed conflict</li><li data-bbox="245 952 877 1021">• Actions endanger human life or cause serious property damage</li><li data-bbox="245 1021 877 1182">• Perpetrators intend to terrorize or to send a particular message that is political, racial, religious and/or ideological</li></ul>	<p data-bbox="928 555 1579 746">The United Nations Genocide Convention defines genocide as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:</p> <ul data-bbox="928 785 1579 1170" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="928 785 1579 821">• Killing members of the group;</li><li data-bbox="928 821 1579 900">• Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;</li><li data-bbox="928 900 1579 1014">• Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;</li><li data-bbox="928 1014 1579 1090">• Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;</li><li data-bbox="928 1090 1579 1170">• Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group”</li></ul>

Religious racism in Brazil today unquestionably satisfies the generally accepted criteria for both terrorism and genocide. The perpetrators of these attacks are operating on a large scale, with the intent of terrorizing, physically harming and even destroying Afro-Brazilian religious communities. In some cases, attackers have sent threatening letters and videos, scrawled messages on places of worship, and hurled insults that expressly convey genocidal intent. Many of the attacks in the database pose a danger to human life or cause the level of destruction required to meet the definition of terrorism; these same systematic assaults on devotees and places of worship would cause the type of bodily and mental harm that constitutes genocide.

The implications for applying these terms are enormous. Genocide is a category of human right known as "jus cogens" or peremptory norms. This means that no one is ever permitted to commit genocide under any circumstances and that every nation has the obligation to prevent genocide from occurring. Terrorism remains a controversial term that usually signifies that a state perceives a group as posing a major threat to life or liberty. Were Brazil to label all Protestant extremists— or at the very least the Evangelical traffickers in Rio de Janeiro— as a terrorist threat, it would imply that the state has a duty to engage in more meaningful efforts to combat their growth. This might include measures such as monitoring the virtual and physical activities of certain Evangelical groups, studying the recruitment methods and the radicalizing factors, or even banning some groups or activities altogether.

# CONTACT US

If you have suggestions about further research or have noted any errors in this report,  
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If you would like to become a member of the International Commission to Combat  
Religious Racism, please fill out an [APPLICATION](#).

If you would like to be listed as an affiliated scholar or professional on our “resources” page,  
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