

## From human rights to “righteous humans”: Brazilian foreign policy in the Bolsonaro era

Cristina Buarque de Hollanda, Danielle Costa da Silva, Pablo Saturnino Braga & Carlos R. S. Milani

**To cite this article:** Cristina Buarque de Hollanda, Danielle Costa da Silva, Pablo Saturnino Braga & Carlos R. S. Milani (12 Dec 2023): From human rights to “righteous humans”: Brazilian foreign policy in the Bolsonaro era, Journal of Human Rights, DOI: [10.1080/14754835.2023.2276420](https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2023.2276420)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2023.2276420>



Published online: 12 Dec 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 36



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

---



## From human rights to “righteous humans”: Brazilian foreign policy in the Bolsonaro era

Cristina Buarque de Hollanda<sup>a,b</sup> , Danielle Costa da Silva<sup>b</sup> ,  
Pablo Saturnino Braga<sup>c</sup> , and Carlos R. S. Milani<sup>d</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>New York University Abu Dhabi; <sup>b</sup>Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; <sup>c</sup>UERJ; <sup>d</sup>Rio de Janeiro State University

### ABSTRACT

This article questions the widely accepted belief that the institutionalization of human rights norms automatically results in their advancement and safeguarding. Instead, it proposes an alternative view, suggesting that the international human rights framework is intricately entangled with politicization. Focusing on the case of Jair Bolsonaro’s presidency in Brazil, we argue that human rights bodies may serve antihuman-rights policies and propaganda. The article is divided into three sections, analyzing Bolsonaro’s and Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo’s rhetoric on human rights, its direct echo in Brazil’s votes in the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the resistance to Bolsonaro’s policies by various actors in the international arena of human rights. We draw on existing scholarship, extensive corpus of speeches, reports, and media coverage to examine the Bolsonaro phenomenon and the limits and fragility of the international human rights regime and diplomacy in responding to it.

### Introduction

The interplay between foreign policy and human rights has been a central topic of debate in the realm of International Relations (Braga, 2020; Buckley, 1980; Carleton & Stohl, 1985; Forsythe, 2012; Risse et al., 1999; Silva, 2020). This debate essentially revisits the age-old clash between idealism and realism, as well as the classical dilemma between morality and politics. Most national governments tend to base their foreign policy on a realistic perspective of international relations, prioritizing the protection of sovereignty and national interests. As a result, state actions that genuinely address human rights concerns are relatively rare. In many instances, discussions surrounding human rights violations remain confined to the domain of political propaganda, with countries critiquing each other (Wallerstein, 2006, p. 43) mainly to score visible and marketable moral points. Within this landscape, the international human rights regime becomes deeply entangled in broader processes of hyper politicization (Belli, 2009; Milani, 2012).

The mainstream scholarship on human rights posits that the institutionalization of human rights leads to their promotion and protection. For Sikkink (2011, 2017), one of the leading scholars in the field, the proliferation of legal frameworks, international treaties, judicial systems, and human rights organizations—both domestic and global—has led to a decrease in human rights abuses worldwide over the last few decades. In her perspective, the latter scenario is an evolving, almost natural unfolding of the former.

However, the rising influence of far-right political movements worldwide presents a significant challenge to this optimistic outlook (Hopgood, 2015; Moyn, 2019). In this article, we focus specifically on the case of Jair Bolsonaro's presidency in Brazil to question the assumption that human rights bodies necessarily safeguard and advance human rights. We reveal how the Bolsonaro government strategically engaged with the international human rights system to promote antihuman-rights agendas. Rather than outrightly rejecting or boycotting the system, Bolsonaro chose to participate in its institutions and challenge it from within—to which he met little or no resistance. We endorse both the critique of human rights bodies as “toothless lions” (Carpenter, 2000) and the notion that the selective nature of human rights sanctions affects countries differently based on their economic significance (Crawford & Kacarska, 2019; Pender, 2001). Although Brazil qualifies as a developing country, it is one of the most important economies and the largest democracies (in terms of population) in the world, which helped the Bolsonaro administration to be duly spared in its journey against human rights.<sup>1</sup>

This article is divided in three sections: first, a content analysis of speeches (Bardin, 2013; Costa da Silva & Hernández, 2020) given by Bolsonaro and former Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo<sup>2</sup> (2019–2021), a kind of ideological spokesperson for the government who was very vocal in his proposed rupture of perspective with the established understandings of human rights; second, a thorough examination of how Bolsonaro and Araújo's ideas have been put into practice through Brazil's votes in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC); and, third, an exploration of the resistance to Bolsonaro's policies by various actors in international human rights bodies. For that, we draw on existing scholarship, reports from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Brazilian media coverage,<sup>3</sup> and official websites,<sup>4</sup> as well as reports and statements from relevant NGOs.<sup>5</sup> In the final remarks, we reflect on the limits and fragility of the international human rights regime and diplomacy in responding to the Bolsonaro phenomenon.

## From human rights to “righteous humans”

In the 2018 presidential elections, in the wake of Donald Trump's election in the United States and the worldwide far-right tide in countries such as Hungary, Poland, and the Philippines, Brazil joined the ranks of the international far right with the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency. A retired Army captain, Bolsonaro has managed to coin the image of an anti-establishment politician despite his 27 years of parliamentary career. Anchored in the faithful and sector-based vote of the military and the police, the nostalgia of the country's past military dictatorship (1964–1985) has been a centerpiece of his public image. After four consecutive presidential elections (2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014) won by the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, henceforth PT) and the controversial impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff (2016), Bolsonaro became a top presidential candidate by capitalizing on strong anti-PT sentiment that was instigated by grassroots and astroturf movements alike. His eclectic and successful electoral formula, an alleged antidote to the legacies of the PT, combined ultraconservative cultural values, the defense of the “Brazilian family” (roughly the nuclear cis-heterosexual family following traditional gender roles), militarism, anticommunism, economic neoliberalism, and the promise to “fight against corruption.” One of the fundamental threads that held together Bolsonaro's heterogeneous constituency was his antihuman-rights agenda.

In his presidential inauguration speech, Bolsonaro lamented the “misrepresentation of human rights” (Bolsonaro, 2019a) in Brazil. By means of a simplistic rhetoric, which is understood and accepted by important segments of different social classes and organized groups in the Brazilian society, Bolsonaro's public figure has vastly relied on the defense of “true human rights” and the advocacy of the “true values” of “Brazilian family” (Bolsonaro, 2019b). Always alongside the “fight against corruption,” Bolsonaro's discourse has gained an erudite version, so to speak, by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ernesto Araújo.

In his genealogy of the evils that would have flooded Brazil and the world, Araújo cited Nietzsche and addressed a fundamental falling point: the death of God. Referring to Dostoyevsky's main character in *Crime and Punishment*, he tragically concluded, "if God does not exist, everything is permitted" (Araújo, 2019f). And, quoting Gilbert Keith Chesterton, he insisted that "when you don't believe in God, you believe in anything" (Araújo, 2019g). In this arid world of pure matter, void of transcendence, Araújo continued, nazism and communism have flourished. "The destruction of the symbolic dimension is an old objective of marxism," he concluded. According to the then Chancellor, in the trenches against Marxism, liberal democracies fought all along the 20th century, but, after all, despite liberal men and women of faith like Ronald Reagan, liberalism was not immune to the disenchantment of international and national politics. With the emptiness that ended up invading hearts and minds of "people of faith," liberal societies would have left the way open to what Araújo referred to as "globalism," which he defined as an "amalgamation of the globalized economy with cultural marxism infiltrated in the institutions" (Araújo, 2019f). In a single word, "globalism" is "nihilism" itself, he argued (Araújo, 2019d).

In the absence of a moral compass to navigate a world without God, the agents of "globalism" would have formulated, "in a clumsy way, a new kind of religion" (Araújo, 2019d). For Araújo, globalists have "kidnapped and perverted noble causes and concepts, such as human rights, justice and environmental protection" (Araújo, 2020a) and distorted them into "ideology" (Araújo, 2020b). With their "linguistic deconstructionism," such agents of disenchantment have separated "word and reality." In addition, they have obscured the "purpose," the "unity" and the "truth," a "Nietzschean triad," reminded Araújo (Araújo, 2019d).

According to the Chancellor, Bolsonaro's election would have opened a window into this obscurantist scenario. In his "extraordinary struggle" to "reconquer Brazil and give Brazil back to the Brazilians" (Araújo, 2019a), the president was clear about allies and rivals. To establish the terms of good coexistence with the "people," he clarifies: "Our flag will never be red, we will give our blood to keep it green and yellow." Araújo states that Bolsonaro embraced God, the country, and the "truth" (Araújo, 2019d) against "communism" and the "atheist religion of the politically correct" (Araújo, 2019a). By electing Bolsonaro, "Brazilian people" would have joined forces to "lift their heads" and "look in the mirror." There began, according to Araújo, a path that "will never stop" (Araújo, 2019h).

In his speeches, Araújo combined a desire for refinement and bookishness with patriotic and religious fervor: "Brazil, listen today to this clarion that calls you to a great historical destiny" (Araújo, 2019b), "let us dive into the ocean of feeling and hope of our people" (Araújo, 2019a). In his imagination of the future, after leaving aside the "waterless swimming pool that is the global order," the Brazilian grandeur would echo elsewhere, wishfully marking a turning point in the decadent trajectory of the West. Araújo remembered that Bolsonaro was possibly "the first head of state who speaks and uses the word God" (Araújo, 2019d). Indeed, the relation between religion and human rights was a constant in Bolsonaro's speeches as, for example, when he stated that "on issues of climate, democracy, human rights and duties between men and women, all we need is to contemplate the truth following John 8:32: And I will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (Bolsonaro, 2019c).

According to Araújo, a new political time had emerged, which authorized "spirituality" where beforehand there was pure matter and "laws of physics." In practice, he was suggesting a "revolt against ideology" (2019f) and the affirmation of the "opposite of all ideologies": "freedom" (2020a). In a "Christian nation," the Chancellor proposed a "walk back to the self" (2019h). But his reactionary imagination has no clear historical turning point, as going back means returning to the "essential reality," to the "deep truth that is the homeland," which "can only be known through love." In his attempt to be knowledgeable, Araújo resorted to Clarice Lispector, a renowned Brazilian writer, and her idea of nationalism as "self-knowledge." He also used the

Greek concept of *aletheia* to speak of the need to “forget and remember who we are” (Araújo, 2019a). What was at stake in his discourse was thus not a memory inscribed in the order of history, but in a new framing of affections and feelings. That is why, when Araújo announced that “Brazil is back,” he clarified: “back to where we have never been, but where we feel that we belong” (Araújo, 2019f). According to him, it was in the return to what has never been that the remedy for contemporary perversions lies. “In a world of uprooting and homogenization of nations,” the effort to “reconnect with oneself” would be an exercise of authenticity (Araújo, 2019c). It would demand that the country abandon the posture of those who present themselves to a “Miss Congeniality contest,” wanting to “please everyone” (Araújo, 2019e).

Araújo also proposed embracing “true human rights” and, with them, abandoning the “politically correct” narratives stemming from a globalist subversion of human rights (Araújo, 2019h). In practice, he proposed a reframing of the classic category of human rights around two new layers of meaning. The first of them reacts to the bleak reality of a society of fragments, with identities divided around particularities (or “eccentricities”) of groups. Here, Araújo enabled one of the classic tropes of conservatism, the principle of unity, in a harsh and intransigent version. He rejected what he called “racism” and its supposed divisive effect on society. He thus celebrated native populations, the “indigenous peoples,” as “part of the Brazilian people” and not “strange peoples” (Araújo, 2020a). As for the other layer of meaning of the “true human rights,” it referred to the new object claimed for them: “the righteous humans.” In a move frankly hostile to the classic universalist claim to human rights, “the righteous humans” are an exclusionary category referred to the dominant patriarchal, racial, and sexual morals and actors.

In short, Araújo’s advocacy for “true” or “authentic” human rights was broadly structured around five interconnected axes, including (1) promoting ultra-conservative values as part and parcel of his “true human rights” agenda; (2) rejecting “globalism” on behalf of the tenets of the homeland and one’s own nation; (3) opposing “communism,” which is understood as any policies aimed at redistributing wealth or regulating market negative externalities; (4) advancing traditional family values that recognize a man and a woman as the fundamental unit; and (5) restoring religious, cultural, and Christian traditions and a sense of spirituality to combat the disenchantment of the world. Throughout his mandate, his speeches mostly revolved around his advocacy for “true human rights” and anticommunism (Axes i and iii), which coincided with Bolsonaro in the same period. The Chancellor and the president also converged on the relative importance they gave to the topics of “globalism” (Axis ii), resistance to a disenchanted world (Axis v), and “true” family values, in that order. Table 1 organizes the main discursive categories in their speeches, presenting a quantification stemmed from the analysis of categories and synthesizing qualitative inferences developed in this section.

Under Araújo’s leadership, the ultra-conservative rhetoric and biased reinterpretations of human rights norms largely influenced Brazil’s actions at the UN Human Rights Council, a key global platform for human rights. Rather than outrightly rejecting or disavowing human rights, Brazil’s delegation in Geneva and official representatives used the United Nations’ stage to promote—or merely publicize—their antihuman-rights views and agendas, an aspect that will be discussed further in detail in the next section.

## **Brazilian foreign policy in the human rights multilateral regime**

Despite its high rates of rural and urban violence as well as historically adverse income inequality standards, Brazil prior to Bolsonaro’s presidency was widely recognized as an “active state” in promoting human rights domestically and internationally (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). However, under the Bolsonaro administration, human rights became a tool for disruptive diplomacy in the realm of foreign policy (Spektor, 2019).

**Table 1.** Main discursive categories in Bolsonaro and Araújo's speeches: Number of references and qualitative inference.

Analytical category	Number of references in Bolsonaro's speeches	Number of references in Araújo's speeches <sup>a</sup>	Qualitative inference
Conservatism and human rights	26	39	"True human rights"
Criticism of ideologization	8	28	Globalism
Democracy	15	47	Anti-Communism
Family	11	5	"True" family values
Religion	7	25	Religion and tradition against the disenchantment of the world

*Notes:* Source: Created by the authors. Araújo's speeches are notably longer than Bolsonaro's, and this is the reason behind the higher frequency of each category in Araújo's speeches, except for "true family values," which is a particularly important topic for Bolsonaro in the speeches addressed to his domestic audience. The findings in this chart are based on content analysis described in endnote 2. The original categories that guided the research were "Conservatism and human rights," "Criticism of ideologization," "Democracy," "Family" and "Religion." Based on this categorial analysis, we quantified the number of times Bolsonaro and Araújo had mentioned each one of them, as shown in Table 1, then we set up the qualitative inference of their content and reorganized them as: "Conservatism and human rights" corresponds to "True human rights"; "Family" to "True family values"; "Religion" to "Necessity of religion and tradition to resist the disenchantment of the world"; "Democracy" to "Anticommunism" ("true" democracy, for instance, was claimed by both Bolsonaro and Araújo as an antidote to communism); and "Criticism of ideologization" corresponds to "Globalism."

In this section of the article, we delve into an examination of how the five thematic components identified in the Araújo's discourse—which advocated for traditional family values and religion and opposed "communism" and "globalism"—have been translated into tangible actions by the Brazilian government in the regular sessions of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) during Araújo's tenure, spanning from November 14, 2018, to March 30, 2021. These positions, largely followed by other far-right and archconservative governments represented on the HRC, can be broadly classified into four types of action: (1) positions negotiated behind the scenes around "hostile amendments" in order to disrupt consensus-based resolutions,<sup>6</sup> (2) resolutions sponsored by Brazil, (3) resolutions proposed by other member-states that Brazil voted against, and (4) Brazil's abstentions.<sup>7</sup>

The examination of the "hostile amendments" endorsed and promoted by Brazil's representation holds significant importance as they targeted resolutions that were expected to be consensual within the global human rights community. The opposition toward these resolutions indicates a resolute intent to cause disruption. During the period under scrutiny, all of these amendments were linked to gender-related issues, which Araújo repurposed as ideological adversaries to his vision of traditional family values and his belief in revitalizing the world through religion and tradition. More specifically, the resolutions under attack by Brazil and other countries with ultra-conservative views targeted issues related to unequal access to education, child marriage, discrimination against women, and female genital mutilation.<sup>8</sup> Brazil and its allies took a stand against the inclusion of the expressions "sexual education" (Human Rights Council, 2020b), "sexual and reproductive health" (Human Rights Council, 2020c), and "guarantee universal access to comprehensive evidence-based education on sexuality" (Human Rights Council, 2019c) in the resolution texts.<sup>9</sup>

Araújo's unconventional approach to gender issues garnered significant attention and sparked widespread discussion in both national and international media. However, only four of the 23 positions taken by Brazil in the HRC during his tenure were influenced by his guidance on the topic. The vast majority of Brazil's positions were instead driven by the anticommunist orientation, with 18 out of 23 positions reflecting this stance. These data are better understood in the light of Araújo's expansive interpretation of communism, which encompassed any idea or initiative that aimed at redistribution of wealth or alleviation of inequality. Even the classic version of human rights adopted from the Vienna Conference (1993)—emphasizing the indivisibility of social, economic, civil, and political rights—fell into Araújo's label of communism.

The amalgamation of communism and human rights in Araújo's ideology motivated Brazil's abstention from various HRC resolutions, such as those concerning the "right to development" (Human Rights Council, 2019f), the "promotion of a democratic and equitable international order" (Human Rights Council, 2019g), the extension of the "mandate of the independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order" (Human Rights Council, 2020d), and the "use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights" (Human Rights Council, 2019e).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Brazil's opposition to the extension of the "mandate of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt" (Human Rights Council, 2020e) and the resolution addressing the "effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights" (Human Rights Council, 2021b) was motivated by the same set of values. Table 2 sums up how core principles have been mobilized by the Brazilian representatives in the UN Human Rights Council, according to number of references and types of action.

Regarding HRC resolutions focused on specific countries rather than themes, Araújo's anti-communist stance was evident in the use of human rights as a tool for retaliation against countries perceived as enemies. As Table 3 illustrates, when Brazil supported resolutions concerning the "situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" and the "promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua," it was not suddenly aligning with Vienna's human rights paradigm, but adopting a strategic and situational tactic to target communism.

Araújo's use of double standards became apparent when Brazil abstained from taking a stance on three separate resolutions related to Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories,<sup>11</sup> which marked a significant departure from Brazil's position on the issue. This novelty was endorsed by Brazil's decision to vote against the resolutions calling for "Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" (Human Rights Council, 2019b, 2020a, 2021a). This time, the "anti-global" reasoning came into play, with the repudiation of external intervention in matters considered internal to the countries. This same reasoning was behind the vote against "The negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights" (Human Rights Council, 2019a) as well as in the decision to abstain from the "Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights" (Human Rights Council, 2019d).

Most of Brazil's disruptive positions took place after its highly controversial reelection to the HRC. At the same meeting when Brazil sided with Pakistan in the attempt to ban "education on sexuality" (Human Rights Council, 2019c), the Brazilian Foreign Ministry presented its candidacy for reelection to the UN Human Rights Council (June 24–July 12, 2019). In contrast to these and other government initiatives related to human rights, a multitude of actors acted individually or collaboratively on the global stage to seek institutional limits to *Bolsonarism* or simply to "name and shame" the government, which will be further examined in the following section.

**Table 2.** Main core principles used by Brazil in the HRC.

Core principle	Number of occurrences	Type of action
"True human rights"	8 (out of 23)	"Hostile amendment"
"True" family values	4 (out of 23)	"Hostile amendment"
Necessity of religion and tradition to resist the disenchantment of the world	4 (out of 23)	"Hostile amendment"
Anticommunism	18 (out of 23)	Votes against: 6 Abstentions: 8
Antiglobalism	8 (out of 23)	Votes in favor: 5 Votes against: 4 Abstentions: 4

Note: Source: Created by the authors.



**Table 3.** HRC resolutions and Brazilian votes under Araújo.

Session	Date	Resolution	Type	Theme	Vote*	Speech**
41 <sup>a</sup>	7/9/19	<u>A/HRC/41/L.26</u>	Thematic	The right to education: follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 8/4	AWV	1 + 2 + 3
41 <sup>a</sup>	7/10/19	<u>A/HRC/41/L.8/Rev.1</u>	Thematic	Consequences of child, early, and forced marriage	AWV	1 + 2 + 3
44 <sup>a</sup>	7/17/20	<u>A/HRC/44/L.21</u>	Thematic	Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls	AWV	1 + 2 + 3
44 <sup>a</sup>	7/13/20	<u>A/HRC/44/L.20</u>	Thematic	Elimination of female genital mutilation	AWV	1 + 2 + 3
40 <sup>a</sup>	4/5/19	<u>HRC/RES/40/3</u>	Thematic	The negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on human rights	AG	4
41 <sup>a</sup>	7/11/19	<u>HRC/RES/41/3</u>	Thematic	Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights	AB	4
42 <sup>a</sup>	10/1/19	<u>A/HRC/RES/42/23</u>	Thematic	The right to development	AB	4
43 <sup>a</sup>	6/29/20	<u>HRC/RES/43/10</u>	Thematic	Mandate of the independent expert on the effects of foreign debt	AG	4
46 <sup>a</sup>	3/23/21	<u>HRC/RES/46/8</u>	Thematic	Effects of financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all HR	AG	4
42 <sup>a</sup>	7/30/19	<u>HRC/42/48</u>	Thematic	Promotion of a democratic and equitable international order	AB	4
45 <sup>a</sup>	10/12/20	<u>HRC/45/4</u>	Thematic	Promotion of a democratic and equitable international order	AB	4
42 <sup>a</sup>	10/4/19	<u>HRC/RES/42/9</u>	Thematic	The use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights	AB	4
40 <sup>a</sup>	4/3/19	<u>HRC/RES/40/13</u>	Country	Violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	AG	3 + 5
43 <sup>a</sup>	6/30/20	<u>HRC/RES/43/3</u>	Country	Violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	AG	3 + 5
46 <sup>a</sup>	3/31/21	<u>HRC/RES/46/3</u>	Country	Violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	AG	3 + 5
40 <sup>a</sup>	4/16/19	<u>HRC/RES/40/24</u>	Country	Violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	AB	3 + 5
43 <sup>a</sup>	6/29/20	<u>HRC/RES/43/31</u>	Country	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	AB	3 + 5
46 <sup>a</sup>	4/1/21	<u>HRC/RES/46/26</u>	Country	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	AB	3 + 5
42 <sup>a</sup>	10/8/19	<u>HRC/RES/42/25</u>	Country	Situation of HR in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	IF	4
45 <sup>a</sup>	10/13/20	<u>HRC/RES/45/20</u>	Country	Situation of HR in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	IF	4
40 <sup>a</sup>	4/4/19	<u>HRC/RES/40/2</u>	Country	Promotion and protection of HR in Nicaragua	IF	4
43 <sup>a</sup>	6/19/20	<u>HRC/RES/43/2</u>	Country	Promotion and protection of HR in Nicaragua	IF	4
46 <sup>a</sup>	3/26/21	<u>HRC/RES/46/2</u>	Country	Promotion and protection of HR in Nicaragua	IF	4

Notes: \*VOTE: AWV for "Approval Without Vote"; AG for "Against"; AB for "Abstention"; IF for "In favor." \*\*SPEECH CATEGORIES: 1—True human rights; 2—True values of Brazilian family; 3—Necessity of religion/ God in the face of the disenchantment of the world; 4—Anticommunism; 5—Antiglobalism. Source <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/>. Table created by the authors.



## Resistance in the international and domestic spheres

The responses to Bolsonaro's shift in human rights policies in the international community have involved a diverse range of actors from various official positions and capacities, including international human rights bodies, political parties, NGOs, social movements, and state networks. These actors have implemented various strategies of resistance, although often fragile, and have acted on multiple fronts. The conflict took on diverse levels and forms, ranging from open criticism to pragmatic alliances with the Bolsonaro administration.

This was the case of behind-the-scenes diplomatic politics that prevailed in the process of Brazil's reelection to the UN HRC for the 2020–2022 triennium. Even in its early stages in 2019, the Bolsonaro government's stance on human rights was readily apparent to the international community. In spite of an unprecedented transnational campaign that gathered more than 190 Brazilian entities and 40 international NGOs in signing a manifesto against Brazil's reelection to the HRC (Manifesto of the Brazilian Civil Society Organizations on the candidature of Brazil to the UN Human Rights Council, 2019), the country received 153 votes (of 193 ballots) and obtained one of the two seats then available for the Latin American region. This event laid bare the vulnerability of international human rights organizations in the face of political challenges that can infiltrate their own foundations. As Stephen Hopgood pointed out, "even rhetorical compliance is no longer necessarily a requirement of membership in good standing in the international system [of human rights]" (Hopgood, 2019, p. 812).

Denunciations by NGOs are typically sectoral and guided by their specific agendas, but a few months after the manifesto, in March 2020, during the 43rd session of the HRC, more than 80 Brazilian and international NGOs issued a joint statement urging the global community to adopt a firmer stance against the Bolsonaro administration's disregard for human rights (Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos [IDDH], 2020; Gomes, 2020).

In July of the same year (2020), another denunciation against the Bolsonaro administration took the forefront at the HRC in its 44th session. This time, more than 60 NGOs signed a joint declaration, signaling the construction of a unified resistance in several human rights agendas (Maniero, 2020). During the third cycle of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR),<sup>12</sup> a coalition of 21 NGOs presented a report pointing out that Brazil complied with only one of the 163 recommendations previously issued by stakeholders, states and UN experts<sup>13</sup> (Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos [IDDH], 2019). Another denunciation made by Brazilian NGOs to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the Special Rapporteur<sup>14</sup> for Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst, reported intervention and censorship imposed by the government on the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), the central body for the monitoring of public human rights policies in Brazil (Marinho, 2019).

The response of international organizations to Bolsonaro's aggression was prompt, but it exposed the restricted range of their influence. Michelle Bachelet, for example, former president of Chile and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights between 2018 and 2022, opened an HRC session highlighting the setbacks in Brazilian human rights policies (Chade, 2020). Taking a more audacious stance, Baskut Tuncak, a special UN rapporteur, characterized Brazil's situation as a "state of deep regression from human rights principles, laws, and standards, in violation of international law" and made the unprecedented call for an inquiry into the matter (Human Rights Council, 2020f). In order for Tuncak's proposal to follow through, it would have required a government to draft a resolution and obtain approval from a majority in the plenary of the HRC, but none of this gained traction. Additionally, Tuncak called for a special session of the HRC to address the protection of the Amazon rainforest and human rights—a tool that is typically reserved for situations of severe crises that have the potential to result in major human rights violations—yet another suggestion that did not take off. Despite Bolsonaro's diplomatic isolation and the embarrassment caused by *Bolsonarism* in UN forums, no incisive action was taken against Brazil.

The international human rights scene also echoed domestic aspects of the assault on human rights that aligned with Araújo's views on the subject but gained more local aspects. On the national scene, anticommunism, for example, was translated into an attack on policies to protect vulnerable individuals and populations. The Brazilian NGO *Justiça Global* denounced to the UN rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, Bolsonaro's decision of the 10th of June to exonerate 11 members of the National Mechanism to Prevent and Combat Torture (2013). In an 11-page report (United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment, 2019), the UN Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture classified the decree as a step backward in Brazil's human rights policies and a violation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), of which Brazil has been a member-state since 2007 (Cerioni, 2019).

Indigenous populations were also hit hard by a variant of antihuman-rights rhetoric and actions within the country: the defense that native populations be assimilated to Brazilian society in the name of the motherland and its traditions, unity, and indivisibility. The particularly dramatic situation of the Brazilian native populations and their natural environment hit the radar of multinational NGOs. Human Rights Watch, for example, highlighted the fragility of traditional peoples in a context of new and loose environmental regulations, reduced power of control agencies, and increased incentives for extractive industries in indigenous reserves (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Amnesty International stressed that the antihuman-rights rhetoric of Bolsonaro's campaign was put into practice through administrative measures, with a special focus on the environment and indigenous peoples (Amnesty International, 2021). Global human rights NGOs played their role in giving visibility to the Brazilian scenario, in addition to facilitating the access of national NGOs to the diplomatic channels of different states and international organizations, but they were not the only actors. Such a compelling push of civil society organizations and transnational networks also occurred through the organization of protests in several cities around the world. The #StopBolsonaro movement mobilized thousands of people on social media and in more than 60 cities in 24 countries on June 28, 2020 (RFI, 2020).

Finally, the actions against human rights within the country that garnered international condemnation revolved around two other axes: historical and scientific denialism. A symbolic example of historic denial was the official celebration of the 1964 military coup, on March 31, 2019—a practice that had been prohibited since the return to democracy in the 1980s and is linked to the celebration of the military governments' achievements (DW Brasil, 2019a). Bolsonaro and his entourage actively engaged in denying the seriousness of military crimes. After a complaint by the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) and the Vladimir Herzog Institute addressed to the UN against this governmental initiative, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice and Reparation Fabián Salvioli demanded that the Brazilian president reconsider these celebrations (DW Brasil, 2019b). It was in vain. In the following years, similar celebrations and protests were repeated.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, Bolsonaro actively engaged in disrespecting the guidelines of the international scientific community and the World Health Organization (WHO). After firing two health ministers for not complying with his negationist agenda, he nominated for the position a military man with no expertise in public health and aligned with the president's guidelines (Ministério da Saúde, 2020). The Brazilian government's tragic management of the pandemic led to three different complaints to the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Bolsonaro, one of them signed by a coalition that represented more than a million health professionals in Brazil (Brazilian Health Trade Union Network, Rede Sindical Brasileira UNISAÚDE). These petitions accused the Brazilian president of crimes against humanity and genocide for his denialism and omissions during the pandemic. The ICC, however, provisionally suspended all complaints (Estadão Conteúdo, 2020). Still in relation to the pandemic, 150 organizations of Brazil's Black movement, the "Black Coalition for Rights," filed another complaint to the Inter-

American human rights system (within the Organization of American States, OAS), not yet evaluated.

Also, individuals and groups within the Brazilian state exposed human rights violations within the country to the international community, hoping that would intensify global pressure on the government to change its ways. The role of the Chamber of Deputies Committee on Human Rights and Minorities (CDHM) was particularly noteworthy: It brought to the attention of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights numerous actions by the government that ran counter to human rights and cautioned against an ongoing “authoritarian project” (Câmara dos Deputados, 2020). The CHDM also submitted the report *Human Rights in Brazil in 2019* to the 42nd session of the United Nations HRC, held in September 2019. The deputies representing CHDM participated in the side event titled, “Human Rights in Brazil,” with representatives of Brazilian civil society organizations and global-reach NGOs (Câmara dos Deputados, 2019a, 2019b).

As *Bolsonarism* permeated the judiciary, legislature, and various sectors of the state bureaucracy, national avenues for advocacy were increasingly impeded. By resorting to external pressure, whistleblowers expected—or merely desired—that it would trigger a “boomerang” effect (Sikkink, 2005). That is to say, that it would return to the government as a break on its actions. These actors lacked economic ties or interests with the Brazilian government, allowing them to make uncompromising statements and avoid political entanglements. However, their prospects for success were limited, as for the “boomerang effect” to work against the Bolsonaro government, there had to be a certain level of shared moral values between the actors and the government. In this case, such a shared ethos was undoubtedly absent.

Having a clear understanding of a shared adversary proved to be a crucial unifying force for the diverse actors committed to resisting the government’s retrogressive policies, but the impact of these collaborations was largely symbolic, with little tangible outcomes. Although speeches by rapporteurs and UN officials, statements to human rights treaty bodies, grievances to the Inter-American Court and UN special rapporteurs, or indictments against the president at the ICC might have led to Brazil’s diplomatic isolation in international forums, this represented the extent of the reprisal against the country. National governments did not take action to address the issue of Brazil’s human rights policies.

In response to the stark shift embodied by the Bolsonaro government on the human rights stage, states and global leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Joe Biden resorted only to mild condemnations of attacks against Brazil’s political institutions, with no notable increase in the strength of their rhetoric. Parliaments of member-states of the European Union have obstructed the ratification of the trade deal signed with Mercosur in 2019 due to repeated violations of indigenous peoples’ rights and the lack of environmental enforcement in the protection of the Amazon and other biomes. That was as far as it got. The hesitation, moderation, and even absence of political pressure from states exposes the fragility of the entire international human rights system.

## Conclusion

This article uncovers how the Bolsonaro administration in Brazil cleverly exploited human rights channels to promote its antihuman-rights agenda. Instead of outright hostility, the government adopted a strategic approach, emphasizing deeply conservative values, nationalism, anticommunism, traditional family rhetoric, and religious traditions. In doing so, Bolsonaro’s ministers and official representatives attempted to redefine the concept of human rights in a manner that aligned with their regressive ideologies. Contesting the assumption that the institutionalization of human rights norms necessarily leads to their promotion and protection, we argue that human rights bodies may serve antihuman-rights political propaganda. Moreover, the hesitancy of the

international human rights regime in responding to the Brazilian uproar challenges Sikkink's "evidence for hope" in human rights.

Before Bolsonaro, Brazil had a leading role in decisive moments of the multilateral human rights agenda, such as the reform of the Human Rights Council and the creation of the Universal Periodic Review under the United Nations, both in 2006. In spite of the disruptive foreign policy undertaken by Araújo, the country had a relevant economic power and still navigated the diplomatic credibility accumulated throughout the past decades. The diplomatic community probably interpreted the Bolsonaro moment as an exceptionalism of the Brazilian tradition that was not worth tackling drastically.

The UN Human Rights Council regularly handles cases brought to its attention in a selective manner. This selectivity is broadly based on international power hierarchies, trade, and strategic interests, so that the system tends to be more aggressive against countries with a smaller scale of power in extreme situations such as flagrant domestic institutional breakdowns—such as *coups d'état* or civil wars—when human rights violations are massive.<sup>15</sup> When it comes to stronger nations, the system often shows leniency or even negligence. Brazil is somewhere in the middle; it faced the consequences of diplomatic isolation but managed to avoid sanctions.

Despite the concerted efforts of international human rights bodies, political parties, NGOs, social movements, and state networks to resist the retrogressive policies of the Bolsonaro administration, the outcomes of their collaborations remained largely symbolic, yielding minimal tangible results. This lack of substantial impact underscores the fragility of the entire international human rights system in responding to challenges posed by governments veering away from human rights principles. In addition, the international community's tepid response raises questions about the system's effectiveness in safeguarding and upholding human rights in the face of adversity.

## Notes

1. According to the World Population Review, Brazil in 2023 ranks as the ninth largest economy by nominal GDP (available at <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/by-gdp>).
2. The speeches are part of the collection at the World Political Analysis Laboratory (Laboratório de Análise Política Mundial, LABMUNDO) of the Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ); <https://www.labmundo.org/en/discourses/>). This database captures and organizes speeches from official foreign policy actors, such as presidents and ministers, found on Brazilian state bureaucracy websites. For the content analysis in this article, a total of 46 speeches were considered (22 by Bolsonaro and 24 by Araújo). These speeches were initially screened for content related to human rights and were then analyzed using NVivo 12 software.
3. Through daily alert systems between November 2018 and March 2021, we mapped out the coverage of press organizations that usually follow the Brazilian government's participation in the UN system in Geneva, with emphasis on the UOL website (<https://www.uol.com.br/>), RFI (<https://www.rfi.fr/br/>), Estadão (<https://www.estadao.com.br/>), and Deutsche Welle Brasil (<https://www.dw.com/pt-br/>). Jamil Chade's media coverage was particularly relevant, as he is the only Brazilian correspondent based in Geneva who monitors *in loco* the work of the Human Rights Council.
4. Outside Brazil, we have relied on the UN Human Rights database ([https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr\\_homepage](https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage)), which gathers all the documents of the HRC sessions and the reports of the UPR cycles and special procedures. Inside Brazil, we have monitored the performance of institutions that have addressed complaints of human rights violations to international organizations, stressing the role of the Chamber of Deputies Committee on Human Rights and Minorities and the Brazilian Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil, OAB).
5. We have tracked NGOs having consultative status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and those contributing to the Brazilian civil society report in UPR cycles, such as Conectas Direitos Humanos [Conectas Human Rights] and Justiça Global [Global Justice]. We have also used the annual reports published by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International as key sources for our research.
6. The resolutions we name as "consensus-based resolutions" are adopted "without a vote," which is a procedure considered to be "very close to a consensus." In the routine of the HRC for this type of referral, which is the most frequent one, the President of the Council asks the Assembly if it wishes to

adopt a draft resolution or decision, and if no representative objects then he/she declares, “it is so decided” (United Nations Digital Library, available at <https://ask.un.org/faq/260981>).

7. Our database covers all positions (2), (3) and (4), but not all of positions (1) taken by Brazil in the relevant period for this article. In regard to positions (1), we highlight only four cases of “hostile amendments” that were widely reported on by the media and that illustrate the type of treatment given by the Bolsonaro government to human rights.
8. The resolutions at stake are as follows: (1) The right to education: follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 8/4 (Resolution A/HRC/41/L.26 considered in the 41a. session on July 9, 2019); (2) Consequences of child, early, and forced marriage (Human Rights Council, 2019d) Resolution A/HRC/41/L.8/Rev.1 considered in the 41 session of the HRC on July 10, 2019); (3) Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Resolution A/HRC/44/L.21 considered in the 44 session of the HRC on July 17, 2020); (4) Elimination of female genital mutilation (Resolution A/HRC/44/L.20 considered in the 40 session of the HRC on April 5, 2019).
9. This stance was reflected in the Bolsonaro government’s domestic policies, particularly the sexual abstinence campaign, which was promoted as part of the government’s health policy to prevent early pregnancy, although highly discouraged by the National Health Council (Conselho Nacional de Saúde, 2020).
10. This particular resolution was proposed by Cuba. Brazil’s anticommunist stance in this case is less motivated by the particular topic under appreciation, but by the view of Cuba as an enemy state by definition.
11. The resolutions at stake are as follows: Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights; Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights; Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.
12. UPR cycles refer to the recurring periods in which UN member states present their reports to be analyzed by the Human Rights Council through the Universal Periodic Reviews. These cycles have been in place since the creation of UPR in 2006 and occur every four and a half years. The four UPR cycles are as follows: first cycle (2008–2011), second cycle (2012–2016), third cycle (2017–2021 [2022]), and fourth cycle (2022–2026).
13. In 2019, during the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, between September 9 and 27, the UPR Brazil Coalition was scheduled to present this midterm report, assessing the implementation of the recommendations received in the third cycle by the Brazilian state.
14. The special procedures of the Human Rights Council include independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. They are nonpaid and elected for three-year mandates that can be renewed for another three years.
15. Myanmar, Yemen, Belarus, Syria, and North Korea are examples of countries that are often targeted by UN resolutions.

## Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

## Funding

This work was supported by the New York University Abu Dhabi under a research fellowship; by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) under grant 304314/2019-6; by the Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ, Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) under grant 200/973/2021.

## Notes on contributors

*Cristina Buarque de Hollanda* holds a PhD in political science from the former Universitarian Research Institute of Rio de Janeiro, Candido Mendes University, and is professor at the Political Science Department of the New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) and at the Institute for Social and Political Studies of the Rio de Janeiro State University (IESP-UERJ).

*Danielle Costa da Silva* holds a PhD in political science from the Institute for Social and Political Studies of the Rio de Janeiro State University (IESP-UERJ) and is assistant professor at the Institute of International Relations and Defense of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (IRID-UFRJ).



**Pablo Saturnino Braga** holds a PhD in political science from the Institute for Social and Political Studies of the Rio de Janeiro State University (IESP-UERJ) and is assistant professor at IBMEC and adjunct professor at the Rio de Janeiro State University.

**Carlos R. S. Milani** has a doctorate from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris, 1997) and is full professor of international relations at the Institute for Social and Political Studies of the Rio de Janeiro State University (IESP-UERJ).

## ORCID

Cristina Buarque de Hollanda  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1600-4044>

Danielle Costa da Silva  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2925-8852>

Pablo Saturnino Braga  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4553-2671>

Carlos R. S. Milani  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8204-6827>

## References

- Amnesty International. (2021). *Brazil 2020 report*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/3202/2021/en/>
- Araújo, E. (2019a, January 02). *Speech by Ernesto Araújo during the inauguration ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019b, May 03). *Speech by Ernesto Araújo at the graduation of Instituto Rio Branco*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019c, May 27). *Speech by Ernesto Araújo at the conference “Cooperation between Brazil and Africa,” on the celebration of Africa Day*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019d, June 10). *Speech by Ernesto Araújo at the opening of the seminar on “Globalism” at FUNAG*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019e, August 28). *Lecture by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Brazil’s new Foreign Policy and its trade aspect*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019f, September 11). “Brazil is back,” *Speech by Ernesto Araújo at the Heritage Foundation in Washington*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019g, September 27). *Ernesto Araújo’s words at the event “Rebuilding communities: Ensuring a future for persecuted Christians*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2019h, December 13). “*The New Brazilian Foreign Policy*”: *Lecture given by Ernesto Araújo*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2020a, August 08). *Declaration of Ernesto Araújo on the occasion of the informal meeting of the United Nations Security Council regarding the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Araújo, E. (2020b, October 22). *Speech by Ernesto Araújo at the graduation of the João Cabral de Melo Neto Class (2019-2020) of the Rio Branco Institute*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Bardin, L. (2013). *Analyse de contenu [Content analysis]*. Presses Universitaires de France, Collection Quadriga.
- Belli, B. (2009). *A Politização dos Direitos Humanos*. Perspectiva.
- Bolsonaro, J. (2019a, January 01). *Speech by Jair Bolsonaro during the ceremony for receiving the presidential sash*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Bolsonaro, J. (2019b, January 22). *Speech by Jair Bolsonaro during the opening of the plenary session of the 2019 World Economic Forum*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Bolsonaro, J. (2019c, September 24). *Speech by Jair Bolsonaro at the Opening of the General Debate of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly*. Labmundo, Database of Presidential Speeches, IESP-UERJ.
- Braga, P. R. S. (2020). Democratização, política externa e direitos humanos: Uma releitura do caso brasileiro. *Carta Internacional*, 15(1), 185–207. <https://doi.org/10.21530/ci.v15n1.2020.983>
- Buckley, W. F. (1980). Human rights and foreign policy: A proposal. *Foreign Affairs*, 58(4), 775–796. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20040504>
- Câmara dos Deputados. (2019a, August 28). *Civil society criticizes the government’s removal of a human rights report to the UN and denounces intervention in the CNDH*. <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cdhm/noticias/sociedade-civil-critica-afastamento-de-relatorio-sobre-direitos-humanos-do-governo-para-a-onu-e-denuncia-intervencao-no-cndh>
- Câmara dos Deputados. (2019b, September 19). *CDHM wants permanent cooperation with the UN to monitor and denounce human rights violations in Brazil; entourage participates in a parallel event with civil society*. <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cdhm/noticias/cdhm-quer->

- cooperacao-permanente-com-a-onu-para-acompanhar-e-denunciar-violacoes-de-direitos-humanos-no-brasil-comitativa-participa-de-vento-paralelo-com-a-sociedade-civil  
 Câmara dos Deputados. (2020, May 19). *President and vices of the Commission on Human Rights denounce to the UN “authoritarian project underway in Brazil.”* <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cdhm/noticias/presidente-e-vice-da-comissao-de-direitos-humanos-denunciam-a-onu-projeto-autoritario-em-curso-no-brasil>
- Carleton, D., & Stohl, M. (1985). The foreign policy of human rights: Rhetoric and reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 7(2), 205–229. <https://doi.org/10.2307/762080>
- Carpenter, K. D. (2000). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: A toothless tiger. *North Carolina Journal of International Law*, 26(1), 1–55. <https://scholarship.law.unc.edu/ncilj/vol26/iss1/1>
- Cerioni, C. (2019, December 16). UN committee says Bolsonaro government violates torture treaty]. *Exame*. <https://exame.com/brasil/comite-da-onu-diz-que-governo-bolsonaro-violou-tratado-contra-tortura/>
- Chade, J. (2020, February 27). Bachelet denounces setback in Brazil; government implies political motivation. *UOL*. Retrieved December 05, 2020, from <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/jamil-chade/2020/02/27/bachelet-denuncia-retrocesso-em-direitos-humanos-no-brasil.htm?cmpid=copiaecola>
- Conselho Nacional de Saúde. (2020, January 24). *Recomendação nº 004: Recomenda o cancelamento da Campanha de Abstinência Sexual, promovida pelo Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos em conjunto com o Ministério da Saúde* [Recommendation nº 004: Recommends the cancellation of the Sexual Abstinence Campaign, promoted by the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights in conjunction with the Ministry of Health]. <http://conselho.saude.gov.br/recomendacoes/2020/Reco004.pdf>
- Costa da Silva, D., & Hernández, L. G. (2020). Aplicação metodológica da análise de conteúdo em pesquisas de análise de política externa. *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política*, 1(33), 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0103-3352.2020.33.218584>
- Crawford, G., & Kacarska, S. (2019). Aid sanctions and political conditionality: Continuity and change. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 22(1), 184–214. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-017-0099-8>
- DW Brasil. (2019a, March 26). Bolsonaro determines commemoration of 1964 coup. *DW Brasil*. <https://www.dw.com/pt-br/bolsonaro-determina-comemora%C3%A7%C3%A3o-do-golpe-de-1964/a-48062127>
- DW Brasil. (2019b, March 29). Celebrating 1964 is immoral and inadmissible, says UN rapporteur. *DW Brasil*. <https://www.dw.com/pt-br/comemorar-golpe-de-1964-%C3%A9-imoral-e-inadmiss%C3%ADvel-diz-relator-da-onu/a-48121663>
- Estadão Conteúdo. (2020, September 15). Charges against Bolsonaro are suspended at the International Criminal Court. *UOL*. <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2020/09/15/denuncias-contra-bolsonaro-sao-suspensas-no-tribunal-penal-internacional.htm>
- Forsythe, D. P. (2012). *Human rights in international relations*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gomes, K. (2020, March 10). NGOs make joint statement against Bolsonaro at UN. *DW Brasil*. <https://www.dw.com/pt-br/ongs-fazem-declara%C3%A7%C3%A3o-conjunta-contra-governo-bolsonaro-na-onu/a-52713785>
- Guimarães, F. S., & Silva, I. D. O. (2021). Far-right populism and foreign policy identity: Jair Bolsonaro’s ultra-conservatism and the new politics of alignment. *International Affairs*, 97(2), 345–363. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa220>
- Hopgood, S. (2015). *The endtimes of human rights*. Cornell University Press.
- Hopgood, S. (2019). *Evidence for hope: Making human rights work in the 21st century* (pp. 812–813). Review Symposium. American Political Science Association.
- Human Rights Council. (2019a, April 05). *HRC/RES/40/3—The negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/40/3](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/40/3)
- Human Rights Council. (2019b, April 03). *HRC/RES/40/13—Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/40/13](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/40/13)
- Human Rights Council. (2019c, July 09). *A/HRC/41/L.26—The right to education: Follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 8/4*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/41/L.26](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/41/L.26)
- Human Rights Council. (2019d, July 17). *HRC/RES/41/3—Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session41/res-dec-stat>
- Human Rights Council. (2019e, October 04). *HRC/RES/42/9—The use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/42/9](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/42/9)



- Human Rights Council. (2019f, October 01). *HRC/RES/42/23—The right to development*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/42/23](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/42/23)
- Human Rights Council. (2019g, July 30). *HRC/42/48—Promotion of a democratic and equitable international order*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/48](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/48)
- Human Rights Council. (2020a, January 17). *HRC/RES/43/3—Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session43/list-reports>
- Human Rights Council. (2020b, July 13). *A/HRC/44/L.21—Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/44/L.21](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/44/L.21)
- Human Rights Council. (2020c, July 14). *A/HRC/44/L.20—Elimination of female genital mutilation*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session44/res-dec-stat>. Access on July 21st, 2023.
- Human Rights Council. (2020d, September 25). *HRC/45/4—Mandate of the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session45/list-reports>
- Human Rights Council. (2020e, June 29). *HRC/RES/43/10—Mandate of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session43/res-dec-stat>
- Human Rights Council. (2020f, September 17). *A/HRC/45/12/Add.2—Visit to Brazil: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ToxicWaste/A\\_HRC\\_45\\_12\\_Add2\\_AUV.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ToxicWaste/A_HRC_45_12_Add2_AUV.docx)
- Human Rights Council. (2021a, March 31). *HRC/RES/46/3—Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-situation-in-opt-including-east-jerusalem-hrc-46th-session-resolution-a-hrc-res-46-3/>
- Human Rights Council. (2021b, March 31). *HRC/RES/46/8—Effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights*. United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session46/res-dec-stat>
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Brazil: Eventos de 2019 [Brazil: 2019 events]*. <https://www.hrw.org/pt/world-report/2020/country-chapters/336671>
- Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos—IDDH. (2019). *Mid term report: Civil Society—UPR 3rd cycle Brazil (2017-2019)*. Coletivo RPU Brasil. [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/NGOsMidTermReports/UPR\\_Brazil\\_Coalition.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/NGOsMidTermReports/UPR_Brazil_Coalition.pdf)
- Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos—IDDH. (2020). *Joint Declaration of 87 Organizations on the Situation of Brazil presented at the Session of the UN Council of Human Rights*. <https://iddh.org.br/declaracao-conjunta-de-87-organizacoes-brasileiras-sobre-situacao-do-brasil-durante-sessao-do-conselho-de-dh-da-onu/>
- Maniero, V. (2020, July 01). More than 60 NGOs denounce the Bolsonaro government at the UN for human rights violations in the pandemic. *RFI*. <https://www.rfi.fr/br/brasil/20200701-mais-de-60-ongs-denunciam-governo-bolsonaro-na-onu-por-viola%C3%A7%C3%B5es-de-direitos-humanos-na-pandemia-1>
- Manifesto of the Brazilian Civil Society Organizations on the candidature of Brazil to the UN Human Rights Council*. (2019). Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights. <https://raceandequality.org/english/manifesto-of-the-brazilian-civil-society-organizations-on-the-candidature-of-brazil-to-the-un-human-rights-council/>
- Marinho, G. (2019, September 12). *Organizations denounce the UN intervention and censorship of the Bolsonaro government against the National Human Rights Council*. Justiça Global. <http://www.global.org.br/blog/organizacoes-denunciam-onu-intervencao-e-censura-do-governo-bolsonaro-contra-o-conselho-nacional-de-direitos-humanos/>
- Milani, C. R. S. (2012). *Atores e agendas no campo da Política Externa Brasileira de Direitos Humanos*. In L. Pinheiro & C. R. S. Milani. (Eds.). *Política Externa Brasileira: As práticas da política e a política das práticas* (pp. 33–70). FGV.
- Ministério da Saúde. (2020, May 20). *Ministry of Health publishes guidelines for drug treatment of patients*. Gov.br. <https://www.gov.br/saude/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/ministerio-da-saude-divulga-diretrizes-para-tratamento-medica-mentoso-de-pacientes>

- Moyn, S. (2019). A Discussion of Kathryn Sikkink's *Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21st Century*. *Perspectives on Politics*, 17(3), 816–817. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719002469>
- National Mechanism to Prevent and Combat Torture. (2013). Available at: <https://www.gov.br/participamaisbrasil/mecanismo-nacional-de-prevencao-e-combate-a-tortural>
- Pender, J. (2001). From 'structural adjustment' to 'comprehensive development framework': Conditionality transformed? *Third World Quarterly*, 22(3), 397–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590120061679>
- RFI. (2020, June 28). Paris and several other European cities join the world act "Stop Bolsonaro." UOL. <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/rfi/2020/06/28/paris-e-varias-outras-cidades-europeias-aderem-ao-ato-mundial-stop-bolsonaro.htm>
- Risse, T., Ropp, S. C., & Sikkink, K. (Eds.). (1999). *The power of human rights. International norms and domestic change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sikkink, K. (2005). Patterns of dynamic multilevel governance and the insider-outsider coalition. In S. G. Tarrow & D. D. Porta (Eds.), *Transnational protest and global activism* (pp. 151–173). Roman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Sikkink, K. (2011). *The justice cascade: How human rights prosecutions are changing world politics*. W.W. Norton & Co.
- Sikkink, K. (2017). *Evidence for hope: Making human rights work in the 21st century*. Princeton University Press.
- Silva, D. C. (2020). *Direitos humanos, política externa brasileira e ONGs: A democratização da agenda*. Appris Editora.
- Spektor, M. (2019). Diplomacia da ruptura. In S. Abranches (Ed.), *Democracia em risco: 22 Ensaaios sobre o Brasil hoje* (pp. 324–338). Cia. Das Letras.
- UN Human Rights Database (n.d.). United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. [https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr\\_homepage](https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage)
- United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment. (2019, November). *Views of the subcommittee on prevention of torture on the compatibility, with the optional protocol to the convention against torture, of presidential decree No. relating to the national preventive mechanism of Brazil*. [https://exame.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/views\\_npm\\_brazil.pdf](https://exame.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/views_npm_brazil.pdf)
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. (1993, June 25). Adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/vienna.pdf>
- Wallerstein, I. (2006). *European universalism: The rhetoric of power*. The New Press.