

There is an environmental disaster going on right now in Brazil's Northeast, provoked by a massive oil spill in late August of this year. Activists in the Northeast who live by and from the sea--"People of the Waters" as they have defined themselves--are concerned, and taking what actions they can. But they also would really welcome voluntary expressions of concern coming from people outside of Brazil. It's going to be a long haul to getting the right public responses going across the array of spaces and communities affected by this oil spill. And as is so often the case, the most vulnerable are not at the top of the list--or are little consulted in longer-range response planning. So there is still time for concerned persons to write a simple letter to public officials.

For weeks, young activists of the Traditional Fishermen/Women's Movement (Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais or MPP) have sent out news items and declarations, requesting visibility and action. One of the leading young Bahian organizers, Elionice Sacramento, was invited by the Brazil Initiative earlier this year to be a guest speaker on *Challenges to Brazilian Democracy Conference – Panel V: Environmental Justice and the Right to Land*. You can listen here to her speaking about the very fishing communities which would unfortunately be heavily impacted by the oil spill a few months later: <https://youtu.be/yFThwRxwkwY>. (Ms. Sacramento, by the way, recently completed an environmental studies masters degree at the University of Brasilia whose thesis was a gendered, environmentally-conscious critical history of her own community.)

Much of the most relevant, up to date information on the recent oil spill, its clean-up, and the slow public policy response to those most impacted by the disaster is in Portuguese (see attachments here). But here is some pretty accurate general information in English: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Northeast_Brazil_oil_spill and also here: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-50104828> (hit Google translate if it doesn't come up in English).

One thing concerned persons might mention in a letter is the set of pretty straightforward demands being made by *quilombola* (maroon) fishing communities. They suggest that the following action-steps might be mentioned in letters urging public authorities to take more concerted measures to deal with the ongoing disaster:

- **The Contingency Plan on Oil Spills which exists on the law-books should be fully activated on the Bahia coast.**
- **A Public Health Emergency should be declared for the Northeast and swing into action, not just for leisure areas of the beaches, but also for traditional or artisanal fishing and shell-fishing communities (many of them *quilombola*) who are losing food security and livelihoods.**
- **More precise and careful research studies should be conducted on exactly which local fisheries in the Northeast are, or are not, polluted, rather than keeping in place a blanket, total prohibition against catching or consuming any and all fish and shellfish.**
- **Research on the health risks to "the People of the Waters" needs to be stepped up, and continue.**
- **Fisherwomen and men, and their communities, should be involved in all government planning to deal with the oil spill disaster, whether at municipal, state or federal levels, going forward.**

Follow [this link](#) for a resource on writing an effective appeal letter.

MPP organizers suggest that letters may be sent, in English or in Portuguese, to the following entities:

Superintendência do Ministerio da Agricultura, Pecuaria e Abastecimento-MAPA

**Largo dos Aflitos - Centro,
Salvador - BA, 40080-016,
Brazil
gab-ba@agricultura.gov.br**

**Gerência Regional do Patrimônio da União na Bahia-GRPU
Av. Jequitaia, s/n. Ed. Ministério da Economia (Antigo Ministério da Fazenda) - Comércio, Salvador - BA, 40015-340
Brazil**

**Capitania dos Portos
Av. das Naus, 1-193 - Comercio,
Salvador - BA, 40015-540,**

Brazil

Defesa Civil

**Av. Mario Leal Ferreira, 80 - Brotas,
Salvador - BA, 40243-045,
Brazil**

Ministerio do Meio Ambiente - IBAMA

**Avenida Manoel Dias da Silva ,111, edf. Espazio Montalto
Amaralina
Salvador - BA, 41900325
Brazil**

Marinha-Comando do 2 Distrito Naval

[Brazil's Navy Command of the 2nd Naval District]

**Av. das Naus, S/N - Comercio,
Salvador - BA, 40015-270, Brazil
Conceição da Praia
Salvador - BA
Brazil**

I (Cat) will be relaying the fact that letters have been written to Ms. Marizelha Carlos Lopes, but want to let you know in case there is any message you would like to relay to her (mppbrasil@gmail.com).