

PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

Survey of Social-Environmental Conflicts Related to Shrimp Farming in Bahia State, Brazil

Research maps and discloses conflicts, crimes, and irregularities motivated by the expansion of shrimp farming in the state.

Brazil, 26 March, 2008. The **Survey of Social-Environmental Conflicts Related to Shrimp Farming in Bahia State, Brazil**, produced by the *Rede Manguemar Bahia* (Bahian-Mangrove Sea Network) will be presented on 28 March 2008, at 1:30pm, in the Bahia State Public Ministry Auditorium during the seminar Environmental Justice for Waters, sponsored by the Secretary of Aquatic Resources. The survey is fruit of research carried out during the second half of 2007 and whose purpose is to give visibility to the environmental conflicts motivated by the expansion of farmed shrimp production in the state of Bahia.

The objective is to publicize a synthesis of the conflicts that have been intensely expanding along the Brazilian coastal zone since the 90's, with the establishment of shrimp ponds in lands of traditional populations, such as fisherfolk, indigenous groups, and quilombas (descendants of escaped slaves), where a series of economic, social, cultural and environmental human rights violations of these populations have been registered.

The study focuses on the six Bahian municipalities most impacted by shrimp farming: Canavieiras, Salinas da Margarida, Acupe – Santo Amaro, Jandaíra, Valença, and Caravelas, the latter an example of resistance to the largest enterprise yet proposed in Brazil.

The research followed a methodology that fused an analysis of information produced by environmental agencies, the justice department (*Ministério Público*) and by grassroots entities. Inspired by the Map of Environmental Conflicts in the State of Rio de Janeiro, produced by the Institute of Research & Urban and Regional Planning (IPPUR-UFRJ) and FASE, this mapping demonstrates that the shrimp farms located in Bahia had their establishment and expansion extensively financed by public investments, originating not only from the National Bank of Economic and Social Development – BNDES, but also the Northwest Bank (*Banco do Nordeste*), without having verified compliance with current environmental laws and the negative impacts on common use lands, which are sources of employment and income for a large part of the coastal population. The conflicts have generated aggressions, threats, environmental crimes, and even the murder of a traditional fisherman, which occurred in 2005 in the city of Salinas de Margarida. The shrimp farms, illegally established in mangrove areas – upon which a large part of marine life depends for reproduction – engender serious environmental impacts (such as a decrease in fish stocks) and a situation of unemployment and social vulnerability for the extractivist populations of the coastal zone of Bahia.

The study was funded by the Overbrook Foundation, and facilitated by Mangrove Action Project.

On-line version of study (Portuguese): www.mangroveactionproject.org/mapeamento_bahia

On-line version of study (English translation): www.mangroveactionproject.org/mapping_bahia

Notes to the Editor:

Highlighted Conflicts Presented in the Study

Canavieiras

Shrimp farms obtained licenses from the CRA (state permitting agency) without the population being informed of the impacts of the ventures, and without public hearings being held, as required by law. In 2002, after a major slaughter of crab and fish, over 2,000 families of fishermen found themselves in a food shortage. Many fishermen, employees of IBAMA [Brazilian Environmental Agency], and non-governmental organizations received death threats because they opposed the establishment of farms. Others were threatened with having their boats burned.

Salinas da Margarida

In March of 2005, Paulo Marinho de Almeida, a 33-year-old fisherman, father of four, was kidnapped from a public square by security guards from Valença Maricultura. Held in a private cell at the company's guard house the entire night, Paulo Marinho de Almeida was violently tortured and executed with a bullet to the head. His body was thrown in one of Valença Maricultura's shrimp tanks. His family members did not have access to the body, which was sent in a sealed coffin by the company. Relatives and residents were pressured by the security guards not to attend the burial.

Acupe, Santo Amaro District

The first conflicts occurred as a result of occupation of a common area by the Bahia Pesca farm. Traditional paths were blocked off and dangerous guard dogs were set loose during times when the fishermen typically passed through. The shrimp-farm owners have financed the campaigns of mayors and councilmen, and they have concessions for using the tanks. Fishermen have claimed that the Bahia Pesca farm is a state-government entity, but operates as a public-investment venture in technology aimed at eliminating private companies.

Guaibim, Valença District

In May of 2003, a 17-year-old fisherman from the district of Guaibim was tortured by security guards working for Valença shrimp farms. The teenager was kidnapped in a public square by three armed men and taken to a car used by the security guards of one of the mariculture firms. Alleging that the young man had stolen shrimp from the company, the security guards beat him up and threatened to kill him if he didn't confess to the robbery. Accompanied by police officers, the teenager's step-father managed to locate the young man near the mariculture company and prevent him from being killed, but he was unable to rescue him from the security guards, even though he was escorted by military police offices from Guaibim.

Caravelas, Example of Resistance

In October 2005, a licensing process became public knowledge for the largest shrimp farm in Brazil – COOPEX – The Cooperative of Shrimp Farms of the Extreme South of Bahia, which was to be implemented in the mangroves and preserved restingas in the town of Caravelas. Fishermen, shellfish collectors, NGOs, environmental agencies, cultural movements, and university researchers joined together in a way never before seen, and with the support and solidarity of a group of fishermen and shellfish collectors affected by shrimp farming in the state of Ceará, they mobilized an intense movement against the farm's licensing and in defense of artisanal fishing and the mangroves.

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