**Understanding the effects of authoritarian governance on activism in Brazil**

Paper presented at the Anthropology of Crime and Security Conference

University of Bologna, 18th May 2022

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**Abstract**

There is overwhelming evidence that over the last two decades there has been a surge of violence against activists, environmental and human rights defenders (Asmann 2018; Rossi 2021; Human Rights Watch 2021). Activists from marginalised groups are particularly exposed to the violence of dispossession, experiencing harm, threats, stigmatisation and death in struggles over the environment, land and resources (Le Billon and Menton 2021; Middeldorp and Le Billon 2019). Recent reports by Global Witness (2021) reveal that this phenomenon is particularly noticeable in Latin America, where an increasingly alarming number of activists are being threatened and murdered. This paper shares key findings from a thematic analysis of data gathered through 25 online interviews conducted with social justice activists across Brazil between January and May 2021. It examines three key findings: activists’ perceptions of deteriorating or closing dialogue between the State and social movements; the intensification of experiences of insecurity and the effects of the precarisation of living conditions on mobilisation. The paper sheds light on how contemporary forms of the persecution of dissent are permeated by the legacies of colonialism and the expansion of a capitalist, patriarchal and racialised social order.

**Keywords:** Activism; authoritarianism; mobilisation; Brazil; insecurity; violence.