From Nature to Women's Bodies: Examining Violence against Women in the Brazilian Amazon, and the Case of Marajó

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Abstract

This study examines the human rights violations underpinning the pervasive gender-based violence (GBV) affecting women in the Brazilian Amazon, a region Identified as the epicenter of such violence in Brazil. Through a qualitative approach, I analyze academic literature, reports from organizations like the World Bank, Igarapé Institute, Wilson Center, and Brazilian national data to better understand and hypothesize why GBV levels in the Brazilian Amazon are so extreme. The research focuses on the unique socio-environmental dynamics of the region that exacerbate violence, exploring how gender, identity, race, and class intersect. The 2024 song "Evangelho de Fariseus," which denounces human rights and environmental violations in the Amazon and draws attention to the exploitation and disappearance of children in Marajó, serves as a key case study. Together, the disturbing dynamics of the region and the song drawing popular attention to it they illustrate the severe impact of systemic state neglect and poverty on women and girls in this region. A distinctive feature of this work is the integration of the Ecofeminist theory, linking environmental degradation to women's rights violations. The analysis suggests that deforestation and the exploitation of natural resources mirror the exploitation of women, perpetuating cycles of violence and inequality. Key findings reveal how historical inequalities, structural poverty, and environmental destruction converge to exacerbate GBV in the region. The study concludes with actionable recommendations, advocating for community-based solutions, strengthened legal frameworks, and ecofeminist strategies to empower women as agents of change. It also underscores the critical need for addressing GBV in the Amazon, recognizing the intrinsic connections between protecting the environment and safeguarding human rights.

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Preface

As the daughter of human rights defenders, I grew up surrounded by activism. My father, a federal prosecutor, spent his career fighting for Indigenous rights across Brazil, and my mother dedicated her work as a lawyer to defending workers' rights. I joined them in their efforts from a young age, helping out quietly during community initiatives. But something unexpected started happening: kids from these communities would come to me, sharing their stories of violence.

They talked about their mothers enduring domestic violence or their own experiences with abuse. I didn't know what to say or how to help, but I discovered I was a good listener. That feeling of needing to do something but not knowing how stayed with me. Then, during a high school exchange program in Canada, I saw how that country addressed GBV and supported survivors in its own Indigenous communities. This experience opened my eyes to how different cultures handle these issues. I fell in love with connecting to new ways of understanding life. But when I returned to Brazil, I was faced with a heartbreaking reality: a fellow exchange student from the

U.S. studying in Rio de Janeiro became a victim of gang rape. Her experience of GBV story made national and international headlines, and as someone who had just been an exchange student myself, I felt deeply connected to the case. That was the moment I realized it was time to act. Still struggling with how to express myself and help others process and accommodate trauma, I turned to music for inspiration. These lyrics from the song "Oração" by the band "A Banda Mais Bonita da Cidade" inspired me to create the project "Pra Salvar Seu Coração" ("To Save Your Heart Project") in 2013. The lyrics that inspired me say: "My love, this is the last prayer, To save your heart, a Heart is not as simple as you may think, It fits what doesn't fit in the dark room, It

fits my love, It fits three whole lives in it, It fits a dressing table, It fits the both of us, It even fits my love, this is the last prayer, To save your heart" The "Pra Salvar Seu Coração" ("To Save Your Heart") Project, which has been active for the past eleven years, provides free psychological and legal support to GBV survivors in Brazil and shaped me into the women's rights activist I am today. Over the years, it gained international recognition, including becoming a finalist in the Brazil Conference at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2020. That experience inspired me to pursue a Master's degree abroad to connect with other human rights defenders and bring new ideas back to Brazil. Now, people were listening to me and to the alarming reality of GBV I was presenting. Through passion and advocacy, the good listener became a good communicator as well. As a student at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University, I focused on GBV in Brazil and Latin America, diving deeper into the unique challenges faced in different regions. While living abroad in Hungary, Belgium, and now the United States, I kept a map of Brazil on my wall. Each day, I found myself staring at the map, reflecting on how each state approached GBV and imagining what more could be done. This exercise also started from my time working with the Public Ministry of Paraná in the Support Area for Rape Victims (NAVES), as it showed me how varied the responses to sexual violence are across states. While the Brazilian state of Paraná had NAVES, many states did not. I became curious about why and about the different strategies perpetrators of GBV used in different regions. As I explored these patterns, I discovered that the Brazilian Amazon is the epicenter of GBV in the country. I was shocked and felt compelled to understand why. Once again, music guided me. Aymeê's song "Evangelho de Fariséus" drew attention to deforestation and the exploitation of children in the Amazon, especially on Marajó Island. Hearing it reminded me of how the "unsaid" and the "unseen" can find space in the art and bring attention to harsh realities. Inspired, I chose to focus my research on Marajó to explore the connections between GBV, environmental destruction, and systemic neglect. However, researching GBV in the Amazon has proven to be the most challenging work I have undertaken. The lack of consistent data and limited bibliographic resources about Marajó and dismissive attitudes about is inhabitants, such as the claims that the

well-documented exploitation of the "Balseiras" girls is "fake news," have made this project particularly difficult. Despite these obstacles, I am determined to draw attention to the realities on Marajó Island and use my research as a springboard for further exploration and advocacy, ensuring these issues are not overlooked. My goal is for this work to serve as a foundational study for others seeking to understand GBV in the Amazon, while also advancing my own research for future work. I aim to apply for research grants to expand my project, extending my focus to Marajó Island and other regions of the Amazon. My time at Columbia University has broadened my understanding of human rights violations, and I am committed to focusing my efforts on this region for the foreseeable future. This thesis has allowed me to articulate my findings, especially to draw attention to the dire lack of information on GBV in Marajó; amplify the voices of those in Marajó and shed light on the critical issues they face; and consider how GBV is being addressed in other parts of Brazil to develop recommendations for how to address GBV in Marajó.

Introduction

There is a myth that the Amazon River, and consequently the Amazon Forest, was named after the legendary female warriors known as the 'Amazonas' due to the resemblance between the customs of those living in the Amazon and those of these mythological fighters. The word 'Amazonas' originates from the Greek (a prefix of negation) and mazos ('breasts'), referencing the legend that these warriors would self-mutilate a breast to handle their weapons better.[1] Beyond its mythical etymology, the Amazon holds immense global significance. Spanning nine countries and with 60% of its expanse in Brazil, the Amazon Forest represents one-half of the world's remaining tropical forests, is home to the planet's greatest tropical biodiversity, and is also one of Brazil's six major biomes. Yet it remains a stage for extensive exploitation, deforestation, and systemic violence, where women and children are disproportionately affected by its socio-environmental destruction by those not indigenous to it.

In Brazil, a woman suffers sexual violence every six minutes.[2] The Amazon emerged as the epicenter of this crisis, where recently, research by Igarapé Institute named the Amazon Forest the epicenter of GBV in Brazil. Among the many regions of the Amazon, Marajó Island, situated in the margins of the nation at the confluence of the Amazon River and the Atlantic Ocean, stands out as a microcosm of contradictions. Historically shaped by colonial exploitation of Indigenous and quilombola women (afro-descendant communities formed by escaped slaves), Marajó today exemplifies the intersection of environmental devastation, socio-economic inequality, and GBV in the Legal Amazon. The term "Legal Amazon" (Amazônia Legal) refers to a geoeconomic region established by the Brazilian government to focus on public policies for the Amazon. As mentioned before, it covers nine states in northern Brazil and is home to the vast majority of the

[1] Igor Leal, 2019 19, America. Sao, Paulo, novembro 2012

[2] ANUÁRIO BRASILEIRO DE SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA 2024. São Paulo: Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, ano 18, 2024. ISSN 1983-7364.

Amazon rainforest. It is characterized by unique biodiversity and environmental challenges such as deforestation and conservation efforts.

Belém, the capital of Pará, and Marajó Island both fall within this region. Belém is a key urban center, crucial for trade and political activities in the Amazon. It plays a central role in the region's economy, acting as a hub for products like timber and agricultural goods. Meanwhile, Marajó, the largest river island in Brazil, is known for its cultural and environmental significance but also faces issues such as poverty and unsustainable resource exploitation. Together, these areas represent both the opportunities and the struggles of the larger Amazônia Legal.

One of the most glaring manifestations of violence in Marajó is the exploitation of women and girls, particularly through the phenomenon of the Mulheres Balseiras[3] ('Barge Women'). Trapped in cycles of poverty and abuse, these women and girl-child minors, many of them starting at five years old, risk their lives navigating the river to make themselves accessible to tourist or transport boats, where they are often sexually exploited in exchange for minimal compensation: crackers, small sums of money, or even diesel oil. (Guedes, 2015) Despite numerous reports of abuse and exploitation in this region, research on this exploitation remains sparse, and meaningful interventions are lacking. Reports suggest the involvement of powerful corporations and influential individuals in perpetuating these injustices, adding another layer of complexity to the crisis.

In response to this urgent situation, my research aims to investigate the intersection of gender, climate, poverty, and exploitation in the Amazon, and how those factors facilitate gender-based human rights violations against women and girls living in Marajó. Drawing on reports from organizations such as Oxfam, the Igarapé Institute, Brazilian data centers such as the 18th Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (2024) and Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) as well as scholarly analyses, I will examine the conditions that might be rendering this region so dangerous for women and girls. I will bring up some complications I have found on the

[3] In the Marajó region, "balseiras" refers to riverside women involved in prostitution along the region's rivers. They often engage in sexual commerce on boats traveling through the waterways. Despite being labeled as "prostitutes," many do not identify as such. According to Guedes (2015), the term reflects the unique social context of these women, who navigate commercial and emotional relationships. Their lives are shaped by economic survival and social stigma.

way, such as lack of information about this violence, conflictual data in terms of the actual GVB, and the actors behind it besides the family members, all of which create a sense of “numerous missing pieces” to understand the cycle of violence better. Connected to that, my study will also explore how religious figures, local leaders, and civil society have raised alarms about the violence in Marajó, and evaluate the responses, or lack thereof, from the Brazilian government and society at large.

Brazilian women and girls in the Amazon region face heightened exposure to sexual violence[4] by actors such as family members: stepfather (12,7%), father (7,3%), brother (2%); intimate partners, boyfriend (15,5%), husband (5,2%), ex-boyfriend (1,8%); family friends (24,8%), unknown aggressors (11,2%); and others (19,5%) which is the second highest actor of violence, and together with the unknown aggressors does not clarify if it englobes foreigners or not, although the occurrence of foreign aggressors has been mentioned in several research, but not quantified in numbers. In comparison with the rest of the country, The Igarapé Institute[4] indicates a staggering rate of 61% of violence in the Amazon compared to 47% in the rest of Brazil. The underlying reasons for this disparity remain uncertain, with factors such as geographical location, historical human rights violations, governmental neglect, and the intersectionality of gender, race, and class likely contributing to the prevalence of sexual violence.

Beyond documenting the crisis, my research seeks to propose a new path forward in understanding the sexual exploitation of women and girls in Marajó. By highlighting the role of ecofeminism and the unique relationship between women and the environment, I argue that the Amazon, a biome referred to as "female" by its epistemological word, mythical legends, and by the notion of “mother earth”, for its nurturing and life-sustaining qualities, requires women at the forefront of efforts to address its socio-environmental challenges. Women, as key stakeholders and change-makers, are uniquely positioned to advocate for sustainable and equitable solutions that address both environmental degradation and gender-based violence (GBV).

As noted, I have a decade-long involvement in in-person advocacy for survivors of sexual

[4] FVS (Fundação de Vigilância em Saúde do Amazonas), March 31, 2023

violence in Brazil through my non-governmental Organization (NGO) ‘Pra Salvar Seu Coração’ (‘Saving Your Heart Project’), as well as prior service with the Ministry of Public Affairs in the

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Support Area for Rape Victims. With this background, I embark on this research endeavor with a specific aim: to gain a deeper understanding of the main factors placing women and girls in the Amazon in general at higher risk of violence. Specifically, I will focus on psychological, domestic, and sexual violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse. In the final stage of my study, I will analyze how international humanitarian law could be applied to restore dignity and justice to women and children affected by violence in the Amazon. By situating the struggles of women in Marajó within the broader context of global human rights frameworks, my research will offer concrete recommendations for addressing the exploitation of women’s bodies and advancing gender equity in the Amazon.

Through this work, I aim to illuminate the connections between climate change, environmental exploitation, and gender-based violence. I advocate for a future where Amazon’s women lead the way toward transformative change. In a country lacking a consistent support framework, how can survivors navigate trauma, reclaim their lives, and restore their dignity, particularly considering the regional disparities in assisting survivors of sexual violence? This question gains added urgency when we turn our attention to a specific region in Brazil, where incidents of sexual violence not only reach their highest levels but are also double[5] compared to other regions: the Amazon Forest as part of other nations.

My research is centered on understanding the systemic factors that place women and girls in the Amazon, particularly in Marajó, at such heightened risk of violence. This includes examining the socio-economic, psychological, and structural dimensions of violence, alongside the environmental and historical contexts that perpetuate exploitation. For example, deforestation and climate change not only disrupt local ecosystems but also exacerbate poverty and displacement, creating conditions where women and children are more vulnerable to abuse.

Reports from organizations such as Oxfam, Wilson Center (Brazil Institute), World Bank, and the Igarapé Institute) will be critical in analyzing these dynamics.

The exploration of ecofeminism, as a theoretical framework that will guide the arguments and perspectives of this thesis. The Amazon, often described as a "female" biome for its life-sustaining qualities, symbolizes feminine qualities, including resilience and nurturing. Women, as stewards of the land and their communities, are uniquely positioned to lead efforts in addressing the socio-environmental challenges that define the region. By positioning women as central agents of change, I argue that solutions to both environmental degradation and gender-based violence can emerge from their leadership. My research will adopt a three-pronged approach:

1. **Systematic Qualitative Review**

   A comprehensive review of existing literature on violence against women and girls in the Amazon, with a particular focus on Marajó Island. This phase will explore hypotheses about the persistence of violence, examine victim-centered methodologies, and assess ex-existing frameworks for survivor support.

2. **Policy Analysis and International Perspectives**

   Building on insights from the qualitative review, I will analyze how international humanitarian law and frameworks, such as the United Nations principles on gender GBV, can be applied to address the crisis. This will include recommendations for incorporating these principles into Brazil's policy responses.

1. **Conclusion and Recommendations**

   Synthesizing findings from the earlier phases, I will propose actionable strategies for empowering women and addressing systemic gaps in support. These will include both local solutions, such as community-driven initiatives, and international approaches, emphasizing the role of women as agents of change in the Amazon. Situated within a nation where a woman is sexually assaulted every six minutes, the Amazon in the

nation-state of Brazil represents the most urgent frontier for addressing GBV. However, the Amazon is also a symbol of resilience and renewal. Just as the forest nurtures life, so must women be empowered to nurture the life of their environment by leading the fight against its exploitation and violence. By centering women's voices and experiences and leveraging the principles of ecofeminism and international humanitarian law, we can envision a future where the Amazon is not only a bastion of ecological diversity but also a beacon of gender equity and human dignity. Through this research, I aim to illuminate the profound connections be- tween climate change, environmental exploitation, and gender violence while advocating for a feminist vision of the Amazon that places women at the forefront of transformative change.

Research Question

"What are the systemic factors driving the disproportionately high levels of sexual violence against women and girls in the Amazon region, particularly on Marajó Island? How do historical legacies of exploitation, environmental destruction, and socio-economic inequality intersect to exacerbate this crisis? Furthermore, what actionable strategies, grounded in ecofeminist principles, community-based approaches, and international humanitarian law, can be implemented to address these challenges, restore dignity to survivors, and empower women as central agents of change in the Amazon?"

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to explore the intersection of GBV, environmental exploitation, and socio-economic disparities in the Amazon, focusing on Marajó Island. Without fieldwork, the study relies on an in-depth review of secondary sources, reports, and existing data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the crisis and identify ac- actionable solutions.

2.1 Systematic Literature Review

The research begins with a detailed examination of existing literature, reports, and case studies to establish a foundation for understanding the key issues. This includes:

1. Historical Context: Analyzing the legacy of colonial exploitation, systemic inequalities, and state neglect that have shaped gender dynamics and violence in the Amazon.
2. Contemporary Challenges: Investigating how deforestation, climate change, and socio-environmental degradation exacerbate vulnerabilities for women and girls in the region.
3. Legal and Policy Frameworks: Reviewing Brazilian domestic laws and international humanitarian law as they pertain to violence against women, human rights violations, and environmental justice.

2.2 Secondary Data Analysis

To complement the literature review, the study will analyze existing data from:

- Governmental Reports: Evaluating data from Brazilian institutions such as the Ministério Público and IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) for insights into regional disparities in violence and access to support services.
- NGO Reports and Advocacy Materials: Incorporating findings from civil society organizations operating in the Amazon to understand their perspectives on the crisis and proposed interventions.

2.3 Thematic Analysis

Using qualitative thematic analysis, the research will identify patterns, gaps, and insights from the reviewed materials. This process will involve organizing findings into thematic categories, such as intersectional impacts of race and gender, state neglect, and colonialism. Synthesizing insights to build a holistic understanding of the drivers and consequences of

violence in Marajó Island and the wider Amazon.

2.4 Application of Ecofeminist

The research will integrate ecofeminist theory to explore the links between environmental degradation and violence against women, emphasizing how gendered exploitation mirrors the exploitation of natural resources.

2.5 Recommendations

The study concludes by synthesizing findings into actionable recommendations. These will focus on:

- Proposing ecofeminist strategies that center women as leaders in resolving socio-environmental and gendered challenges in the region.
- Advocating for international and national legal frameworks to address systemic neglect and restore justice to survivors.

Literature Review

In The Profile of Rape Victims in Brazil and the Formation of Subjectivity, Maristela Sobral Cortinhas and Maria Sara de Lima Dias analyze the demographic and social profile of sexual violence victims in Brazil, using longitudinal data from epidemiological and security reports. They reveal that the majority of victims are female, with a significant proportion being children or adolescents. Between 2011 and 2017, 76.5% of reported abuse cases involved minors under 18, and the peak incidence occurred among girls aged 10 to 13. Violence predominantly occurs in private spaces, often the victim's home, and is frequently perpetrated by individuals within their familial or social circle, underscoring its intrafamilial nature. Such settings contribute to the normalization of abuse, complicating its visibility and reporting. The study spans multiple regions in Brazil but highlights disparities in data reporting across states.

Joaquim Hudson de Souza Ribeiro et al., in their study Violência Sexual Contra Crianças

e Adolescentes: Resiliência e Protagonismo na Amazônia, address the alarming prevalence of sexual violence against children and adolescents in the Amazon. They highlight that the violence permeates social structures, particularly affecting indigenous, riverine, and urban periphery communities. Perpetrators often exploit systemic vulnerabilities, including geographic isolation, cultural stigmas, and weak institutional protections, leaving children and adolescents disproportionately affected. The authors emphasize the multifaceted nature of the problem, which involves structural, cultural, legal, and ethical dimensions. Despite some advances in the regional protection network, sexual violence remains normalized, demanding a cultural and systemic shift.

The Projeto Içá-Ação e Proteção, initiated in the states of Pará and Amazonas, exemplifies a community-driven response aligned with Brazil's National Plan to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents. From 2016 to 2018, 1,434 adolescents participated in resilience-building initiatives, creating proactive roles for themselves in combating sexual violence. Activities included workshops, community actions, and mobilizations in schools and Indigenous ter- ritories. Results demonstrated an increase in awareness about sexual violence, improved family relationships, and strengthened community ties. Adolescents became central agents of change, with increased self-esteem and leadership roles, fostering a cultural shift toward protecting rights and ensuring safety in their environments.

In Sexual Violence Against Women in the Western Amazon, Cargnin et al. (2021) provide an alarming view of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Amazon, with a focus on the city of Rio Branco in the state of Acre. They underscore that sexual violence is a persistent and deeply ingrained issue in cultures in the Amazon, shaped by intersecting vulnerabilities such as age, socioeconomic status, and regional disparities. The study highlights the particular susceptibility of young women, with most victims being between ten and fourteen years old. Residences are the primary sites of violence, often perpetrated by intimate partners, highlighting a troubling pattern of domestic abuse. This violence frequently goes unreported, a problem exacerbated by underfunded services, cultural normalization, and victims' dependence on their aggressors.

The authors draw attention to the regional context, noting that Acre has some of the highest

notification rates of sexual violence in Brazil. They attribute this partially to improvements in reporting mechanisms, yet vast underreporting remains a significant barrier. Victims often live in poverty and have limited access to education and public services, further marginalizing them. The study emphasizes the urgent need for systemic interventions that address the root causes of GBV in the Amazon, such as strengthening social protections, improving access to justice, and promoting cultural shifts to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms. By situating their findings within the broader socio-environmental realities of the Amazon, the authors present GBV as both a public health crisis and a profound violation of human rights.

Guimarães (2021) emphasizes that Marajó hosts some of Brazil's poorest municipalities, with Melgaço, Chaves, and Bagre suffering extremely low Human Development Index (HDI) scores Structural deficiencies, such as limited access to potable water, sanitation, and public healthcare, severely undermine living conditions. Coupled with poverty, these deficits render children vulnerable to grave human rights violations related to child labor, sexual exploitation, and trafficking, particularly in remote riverine areas like the Rio Tajapuru. Despite national attention since 2006, when formal complaints brought these abuses to light, responses remain inadequate. Violations persist, largely fueled by systemic inequality, governmental neglect, and cultural stigmatization of victims.

Efforts to ensure human rights protections face substantial challenges. Guimarães notes the region's geographical isolation and logistical barriers, which hinder the implementation of public policies and services. The socio-legal networks established in municipalities like Breves and Mel- gaço often operate under-resourced, with professionals experiencing significant strain due to high caseloads and the absence of interdisciplinary teams. Furthermore, policies such as the "Abrace o Marajó" program, though well-intentioned, are criticized for their superficial approaches that fail to address structural poverty and systemic inequalities. Guimarães (2021) argues that addressing these challenges requires intersectoral and interdisciplinary strategies, as well as a commitment to collective, inclusive, and sustained intervention programs.

Levy and Mendonça, in their work "'Balseiras' Women: The Commodification of Female Bodies on the Island of Marajó," explore the sexual exploitation of women and girls in Marajó's riverine

communities. The phenomenon centers on the "balseiras," women and girls who provide sexual services on ferries navigating the Amazonian waterways. This practice is deeply embedded in historical patterns of exploitation, dating back to the colonial period and perpetuated by systemic poverty, gender-based violence, and insufficient public policies. The authors emphasize that the sexual commodification of female bodies in this context is normalized by socioeconomic conditions and societal structures, further exacerbating the marginalization of these women. The aggressors, they note, are part of a systemic network that includes politicians, businesspeople, law enforcement officials, and even family members, highlighting the deep entrenchment of this abuse within the region's social and institutional frameworks. The authors argue that the phenomenon must be understood within the cultural and economic realities of the region. Marajó, despite its ecological wealth, suffers from chronic underdevelopment- ment, pushing many women into exploitative practices as a means of survival. Levy and Mendonça highlight the need for transformative solutions, focusing on systemic changes rather than blaming the victims or their families. They propose that comprehensive public policies, informed by the region's socio-cultural specificities, are vital to addressing the exploitation of women and promoting gender equality. Additionally, the authors stress the importance of dismantling patriarchal structures and fostering empowerment through education, economic opportunities, and community support systems.

The study "Analyzing the Reality of Trafficking of Women: A Perspective on Sexual Exploitation" by Anne Letycia Santos Lima highlights the troubling reality of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in Marajó Island, located in the state of Pará in , Brazil. This region has a long his- tory of child sexual exploitation and sex tourism, with investigations dating back to 2006 revealing systemic issues such as local politicians' alleged involvement. The exploitation occurs in various forms, including family or community abuse, recruitment by trafficking networks, and tourism-related sexual exploitation.

The geographical isolation of Marajó Island exacerbates these issues, making it difficult for authorities to monitor and disrupt trafficking activities. Victims, often children, face devastating psychological and physical consequences, including early exposure to abuse that

forces them to mature prematurely. Some women, trapped in cycles of poverty and exploitation, make desperate choices, including selling their children for survival. To combat this, the study stresses the importance of addressing root causes like poverty and lack of opportunities, while implement- ing prevention strategies, offering victims access to shelter, legal aid, mental health services, and education, and strengthening enforcement mechanisms.

Deborah Saidero's article, "'Violence against the Earth is Violence against Women': The Rape Theme in Women's Eco-Narratives," explores the metaphorical and material connections between the exploitation of women and the environment. She argues that the violation of women's bodies is deeply tied to the exploitation of the Earth, particularly within colonial and capitalist frameworks. Saidero highlights how rape is used as a symbol and tool of domination, with colonial rhetoric likening the conquest of "virgin" lands to the violation of women. This dual violence is both metaphorical, shaping cultural narratives, and material, with Indigenous women, in particular, suffering heightened physical and environmental harm near industrial extractive sites.

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, in Ecofeminism, define the framework as a critique of capitalist patriarchy, which they identify as a system rooted in the dual domination of women and nature. They argue that the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women are interlinked, and sustained by the same structures of power and control. Ecofeminism emphasizes cooperation, mutual care, and interdependence as alternatives to the hierarchical and exploitative relationships that define capitalist patriarchy. The authors critique modern science and development models, which they see as perpetuating a reductionist, mechanistic worldview that seeks to dominate and control. This perspective has led to ecological degradation and the marginalization of women, particularly in the Global South. Through examples like the Chipko movement in India and the resistance to genetically modified Organisms (GMOs), Mies and Shiva highlight how women, as primary caregivers and stewards of natural resources, are at the forefront of environmental struggles. They advocate for the "subsistence perspective," which prioritizes local, sustainable economies over globalized, profit-driven systems.

Ecofeminism, as discussed by Saidero, critiques this interconnected domination, seeking

to transform destructive colonialist and capitalist ideologies into models of care and mutual respect. The article emphasizes the vital role of women as environmental protectors, advocating for a partnership ethos" to heal both the Earth and its people.

Chapter 1: Violence Against Women in the Amazon Forest

Violence against women in the Amazon is exacerbated by land disputes and environmental conflicts, with women facing higher violence levels than in other parts of Brazil. Regional studies, including those by the Igarapé Institute, highlight that women not only suffer from violence but also endure threats and reprisals as defenders of the Amazon, in a region where gender inequality and violence are normalized.

Data from the Public Security Secretariats of Brazilian states show mixed trends in femicides, or intentional homicides against women and girls, in the Amazon region. Between 2017 and 2022, Amazon experienced a 12% reduction in femicide among women, slightly below the 14% decline observed nationally. However, within the Amazon, significant regional disparities emerge. Four states—Rondônia (+58.6%), Mato Grosso (+41.4%), Maranhão (+26.4%), and Tocantins (+10.9%)—reported increases in femicide rates over the past five years. These trends highlight the uneven safety landscape within the Amazon and the vulnerability of women in certain states.

Similarly, femicide rates have risen sharply in the Amazon. While Brazil as a whole saw a 12% increase in femicide rates, the Amazon reported a 22% rise during the same period. By 2022, femicide rates in the Amazon slightly exceeded the national average, standing at 1.6 per 100,000 women compared to 1.3 nationally.

The situation becomes even more alarming when examining non-lethal violence in the Legal Amazon, or the geographical space that Amazon occupies throughout South America. Over the past five years, Amazon has seen a 47% increase in non-lethal violence rates, far outpacing the 12% increase observed nationwide. While historically lower than the national average, the sharp upward trajectory in the Amazon signals a growing crisis, where:

1. Physical Violence increased by 37% in the Legal Amazon, compared to a modest 3% rise

nationally.

2. Property Violence: The region saw a 62% surge in property-related violence versus a 51% increase nationwide.

3. Psychological Violence: Instances of psychological abuse rose by a staggering 82%, compared to just 14

Sexual violence, in particular, has reached distressing levels in the Amazon. In 2018, the rate of sexual violence against women in the region was 45.4 per 100,000, compared to 32.9 nationally. By 2022, this rate had escalated to 60.8 in the Amazon, significantly outpacing the national average of 47.0. A striking feature of this violence is its impact on girls aged 0 to 14 years, who accounted for approximately 69% of all sexual violence victims in the Amazon over the past five years.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, with the Legal Amazon experi- encing a significant uptick in psychological and property violence during the most critical phases of the crisis. While much of Brazil reported declining rates of non-lethal violence between 2019 and 2020, the Amazon saw dramatic increases in property violence rates, which soared by 134%, from 3.5 per 100,000 women in 2019 to 8.2 in 2020. The state of Pará alone accounted for 76% of all reported cases in the Legal Amazon during this period. The Psychological Violence rates were also alarming: it doubled, rising from 66.7 per 100,000 women in 2019 to 133.3 in 2020. Again, Pará was a key driver, contributing 68% of reported cases in the region.

The Igarapé Institute's findings highlight the compounded challenges faced by women in the Amazon. They are not only more likely to be victims of violence but are also disproportionately targeted for their efforts to protect their land, communities, and environment. Activist women defending the Amazon biome face systemic threats, further illustrating how GBV intersectswith environmental and socio-political dynamics.

The growing rates of violence against women in the Amazon underscore the need for

targeted interventions. The region's unique socio-environmental challenges, coupled with systemic inequalities and historical neglect, have created conditions where women bear the brunt of violence in multiple forms. Understanding these patterns is critical for shaping effective policies and support systems that address the root causes of this crisis while empowering women as central agents of change.

Understanding GBV in the Amazon through the Lens of Race

The intersection of race and gender plays a critical role in the high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Amazon, especially on Marajó Island. The population here is primarily Black, Indigenous, and mixed-race, with a history rooted in systemic racism and marginalization. Despite the rich cultural and environmental diversity of the region, its residents often face neglect from the state, which leads to insufficient responses to the violence that disproportionately affects these populations, particularly women.

Brazil has the second-largest Afro-descendant population in the world, and the Amazon, home to many quilombola communities, is no exception. These communities are formed by the descen- dants of enslaved Africans who built autonomous societies in resistance to oppression. Despite their resilience, quilombolas and Indigenous people are often denied access to fundamental rights, including justice and protection against violence. The historical legacy of slavery and the economic isolation of these groups continue to affect their lives today. In Marajó, this history manifests in the persistent lack of basic services, such as forensic expertise, healthcare, and legal protections, services that are vital to survivors of GBV.

This systemic racism, combined with geographic isolation, means that racialized women, especially Black and Indigenous women, are often the least likely to receive support after experiencing GBV. The Brazilian state's failure to address these needs reflects a broader disregard for the lives of non-white people in the Amazon. The racial dynamics of Brazil are intrinsically tied to the country's colonial history, where Indigenous populations were historically treated as "conquered peoples" whose lives were devalued. This colonial mindset persists in

modern times, resulting in continued neglect and violence against Indigenous women. The Amazon region, with its vastness and isolation, provides a context where racialized women are vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, and sexual violence. As Rosa Acevedo Marin and other scholars argue, this is not just a series of isolated incidents; it is a direct continuation of historical colonial violence that began with the Portuguese invasion in 1500. The Amazon, often perceived as a space to be "conquered," represents the ultimate form of racialized violence where Black and Indigenous women are repeatedly victimized.

The absence of a cohesive, state-sponsored framework for protection in the Amazon makes it a fertile ground for this exploitation, which is further aggravated by the historical trauma of racial and gender-based violence. According to the World Bank and Igarapé Institute, addressing GBV in the Amazon will require dismantling these deeply entrenched racial and gender inequalities. Without tackling the intersectionality of race, gender, and geography, any policy aimed at reducing GBV will remain inadequate.

This analysis of race and its role in perpetuating GBV in the Amazon underscores the importance of a comprehensive, intersectional approach to policy reform, one that addresses both gender and racial inequalities. The struggles of quilombolas and Indigenous communities provide a powerful case for why race must be central to the design and implementation of GBV prevention and response mechanisms in this region.

A Case of Rooted Colonialism: Historical and Cultural Aspects

The prevalence of sexual violence in the Amazon is deeply embedded in Brazil's socio-historical and cultural framework, tracing its roots back to the colonization of the Brazilian territory by the Portuguese crown. This violence stems from centuries of gender inequality and exploitation, particularly impacting Indigenous and Black women. During the colonial period, these women were viewed as possessions, with sexual violence serving as a tool for domination and subjugation. Lacerda (2010) emphasizes how the "naked body" of Indigenous women was a pretext for abuse, perpetuating a cycle of violence that endures today. This violence reflects Brazil's failure to transcend its colonial legacy, instead perpetuating it in contemporary times, particularly in conflict zones like the Amazon.

Marajó Island serves as a microcosm of this enduring exploitation. Sexual violence and the sexual exploitation of children, such as the "balseira" girls, highlight the intersection of historical subjugation and contemporary marginalization. As Levy and Mendonça (2022) explain, extreme poverty and the absence of viable opportunities force many girls into prostitution, not as a choice but as a survival mechanism. Vieira (2011) echoes this, noting that the commercialization of female bodies is a reflection of systemic neglect and a failure of public policies to address these crimes. This phenomenon is further sustained by socioeconomic structures that naturalize sexual exploitation, where human rights are overshadowed by the need for survival.

The Amazon itself symbolizes this ongoing cycle of violence. Hundreds of years after colonization, the region continues to represent a land of exploitation, now not only by outsiders but also by Brazilians who see themselves as a superior "other." This is particularly evident in the high rates of sexual exploitation and human trafficking observed in the region. Studies reveal that the North and Northeast regions, encompassing the Legal Amazon, exhibit the highest number of trafficking routes for women and adolescents, primarily for sexual exploitation (ages 15–25). Such exploitation reflects the enduring colonial mindset of entitlement to the land and its

people.

This dynamic aligns with the framework proposed by José Miguel Nieto Olivar, who argues that imperial destruction and exploration directly impact the political control over young women's bodies in these "conquered" spaces. Concepts such as "civilization," "integration," and "security" serve to mask mechanisms of power that perpetuate violence. Murder and sexual violence in these regions expose how such power structures shape governance and statehood.

In Marajó, the remnants of colonialism, combined with extreme poverty and lack of state protection, reinforce a culture of impunity and naturalized violence. From a legal and social perspective, the region functions as a post-conflict zone, where past exploitation under the rubber economy and colonial rule continues to shape the lives of women. Escallier (2011) notes that in riverside communities, prostitution becomes a means of subsistence, reflecting not only social failure but also the abandonment of public authority. The Amazon, as both a geographical and symbolic space, mirrors Brazil's violent colonial past. By analyzing the systemic sexual violence against Indigenous women in this region, it becomes clear that modern Brazil continues to reproduce its most violent history. This perpetuation of violence underscores the country's struggle to address its colonial legacy and its failure to protect its most vulnerable population.

Chapter 2: The Case of Marajó Island

Contextualization of the Island

Marajó Island, meaning "Barrier for the Sea" in Tupi, an indigenous dialect, is the world's largest river-sea archipelago, bordered by the Amazon River and Atlantic Ocean. Despite its ecological and cultural richness, the island grapples with severe social challenges, including disproportionately high rates of sexual violence against children. With a population of approximately 250,000, Marajó reports 69 cases of sexual violence per 100,000 inhabitants, 2.5 times the national average.

Historical significance ties Marajó to early European exploration, yet its contemporary challenges are stark. From 2018–2022, 1,094 cases of sexual violence against children and adolescents were reported, with most classified as rape. This alarming pattern spurred responses like the 2008 Senate inquiry into pedophilia, prioritizing legal proceedings on child exploitation

Administratively, Marajó is part of Pará State's public security framework, divided into the 5th and 8th Integrated Regions of Public Security and Social Defense. Municipalities such as Soure and Breves host child-protection delegations, but logistical barriers like limited access to remote communities and unchecked river traffic hinder enforcement.

Western Marajó reports 54.3% of sexual violence cases, with Breves leading (15.36%), followed by Soure (10.69%) and Portel (10.33%). Municipalities with lower rates, like Melgaço, also record Brazil's lowest Human Development Index (HDI), emphasizing the link between socioeconomic inequality and vulnerability. These statistics underscore systemic disparities and vulnerabilities on Marajó Island, necessitating focused interventions that address socio-economic inequities and ensure protection for at-risk populations.

2024: Aymee's song: Gospel of Pharisees

In 2024, during the finale of Dom Reality, a Brazilian reality show spotlighting emerging Christian singers, artist Aymeê Rocha drew national attention to the severe issues facing children on Marajó Island through her song "Evangelho de Fariseus" ("Gospel of Pharisees"). In this poignant piece, she sings:

"There is a gospel of Pharisees, Everyone chooses their own, Everyone chooses their own. Ah, meanwhile, in Marajó, John disappeared, Waiting for the reapers of the great harvest, The Amazon burns, A child dies, The animals are gone, Overheated by the brothers' ego."

After the performance, Aymee was asked by the reality show judges more about what inspired her songwriting, as well as more information about what was behind the song. Aymee then said:

"Marajó is an island close to Belém, my hometown. There's a lot of organ trafficking there, it's something normal. There is hard-level pedophilia there. It is a very poor region. When children see a boat coming from outside with Marajó tourists, they prostitute themselves inside the boat for R$ 5.00".

Her performance stirred strong reactions across the country. On one side, many applauded her for using her platform to bring attention to these urgent issues, applauding her bravery in speaking out against such atrocities. On the other hand, some critics have questioned her understanding of the situation, with accusations that she doesn't fully grasp the complexities of the problems she sings about, although she is from the region. While some view her as a voice for change, others challenge her credibility, leading to intense debates across social media and public discourse.

Redefining the Home as the Most Dangerous Place

In 2018, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released a study for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, revealing a grim reality: the home is the most dangerous place in the world for women. According to the study, the majority

of female homicide victims worldwide are killed by their partners or family members. Globally, the rate stood at approximately 1.3 victims per 100,000 women, with Africa and the Americas showing the highest risk. In the Americas (North and South), this rate climbed to 1.6 victims per 100,000 women. Despite efforts through legislation and programs to reduce violence against women, the study found little tangible progress in reducing intimate partner and family-related

homicides (UNODC, 2018).

However, in the Amazon, particularly on Marajó Island, this definition of the "home" as the most dangerous place for women and girls is being profoundly redefined. The Amazon, a vast and exploited region that spans multiple states and faces widespread human rights violations, is itself an "exploited home." With extreme rates of GBV, where the cases of sexual violence are 30% more than the rest of the country, and the femicide rates exceed the average for the rest of the country by 48%, Amazon's plight mirrors the experiences of women's bodies within it. The very word "Amazon" (Amazônia) is feminine in Portuguese, underscoring a symbolic connection between the exploitation of the land and the exploitation of women. Just as the Amazon is deforested and pillaged for resources, the bodies and lives of women and girls residing there are subjected to a similar pattern of abuse. Nowhere is this more visible than on Marajó Island, where the line between private and public exploitation blurs, and the violence becomes inescapable. According to Bernardo Rodrigues (2024), 75% of the cases of sexual abuse of minors in the Marajó, between 2018 and 2022 happened inside of the house of the victims.

In Marajó, this dynamic is especially explicit. Extreme poverty, geographical isolation, and neglect from the justice system have created conditions where families become complicit in the exploitation of their children, with young girls and boys forced into prostitution or labor as a means of survival. Here, the home is no longer just the site of intimate partner violence (IPV), it becomes an engine of exploitation that fuels the household. Children, as young as six years of age help sustain their families economically through the small earnings they make in exchange for their sexual exploitation by foreigners on the island. In this way, the violence within the home space extends beyond the physical space of the household, because it is family-guided sexual violence against children in tourist boats and spaces of transportation that comprise the region's broader economy. The Amazon, both as a land and a community, is trapped in this cycle of exploitation, where sur- survival of families and homes often depends on sacrificing the security of those most vulnerable in those spaces, making blurred the boundary between home and public space.

This harsh reality in Marajó challenges and redefines the UNODC's original notion of the

home is the most dangerous place for women and girls. In Marajó, the ‘danger’ identified in domestic violence is not only confined to that committed as a result of ‘family’ relationships. It extends to include the relationship between parents and Others in the broader community outside of the physical barriers of the home in the community and environment. The exploitation is both intimate and systemic, private and public. The Amazon, like the women and girls within it, is a female body that has been continuously violated and commodified. In this region, the connection between land and life is tragically literal: just as the forest is stripped bare, women and children endure violence that feels as naturalized as the exploitation of the land itself.

Despite being a tourist destination, Marajó has one of the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) ratings in Brazil, particularly in Melgaço, where extreme poverty drives a desperate survival economy. Child prostitution and trafficking thrive here, where Indigenous people are forced to exchange resources for diesel fuel and food, and their disappearances linked to organ trafficking syndicates are common. This is not a recent crisis: it has been ongoing for years, though it has only now gained public attention through increased denunciations. This is further discussed in the appendix section at the end of this thesis.

The situation on Marajó Island, in the broader context of the Amazon, reveals the deep intersection between environmental exploitation and gender violence. It highlights how a region, exploited for its natural resources, becomes a dangerous "home" for its women and girls.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Cases in Marajó

The Doctor and the Child Case.

In this section, I will recount a notable incident that took place on Marajó Island to illustrate the dynamics between those in positions of power and individuals living in socio-vulnerable conditions on the island. This case is particularly significant as it sheds light on a well-known issue often surrounded by "fake news" claims about the island's realities. It highlights how political and influential figures can play a pivotal role in either addressing or perpetuating abuse, offering critical insights into the power dynamics at play.

He was a Doctor, trusted by the Marajó Population, who nominated him as State Deputy

during the elections. Owner of several hospitals in the countryside. Extremely healthy. A Husband. Father of the three sons, and white. Those categories, according to awardee Journalist Lúcio Flávio Pinto (2019), helped him set the stage to what he planned to do. Almost as the perfect perpetrator, in a society that always looks for the perfect victim to believe it. And involved by the trust, and the hope of a better future that he sold, the grandmother of a then nine-year-old Marajó girl, "gave" her granddaughter to the Doctor. He claimed he wanted a little girl, at the same age as his own daughter, to accompany her and play with her, and that she would have the same life he was giving to his own daughter. But that was not the case. For the next four years, the doctor sexually abused her, damaging the child physically and emotionally, getting her drunk, and keeping her under constant threat. She was thirteen years old when she went to the child protection council and reported the violence she was suffering. With the help of the child protection counselor Nazaré Regina Pena da Fonseca, she went to the police station to file a police report against the state deputy. What she said was confirmed by other testimonies and by an official expert. The disclosure of the scandal forced the Deputy to resign from office in 2009, to avoid being impeached by his peers. In 2010, he was found guilty of "rape of a vulnerable person in a continuing criminal offense,"[5] and sentenced to twenty-one years in prison[6], initially in a closed regime, in addition to a fine of 120,000 BRL for moral damages[7].

The deputy continued to assert his innocence, claiming the girl's accusations were false and driven by the strict discipline he enforced while caring for her. He alleged that, due to her

[5] Continuity of crime, provided for in Article 71 of the Penal Code, is an institute of sentencing designed to rationalize the punishment of behaviors that, although committed independently, are part of the same criminal development. By legislative option and criminal policy criteria, criminal law exceptionally excludes the application of material concurrence and imposes a single punishment on those cases in which subsequent crimes may be considered as a continuation of a first crime, according to the analysis of the conditions of time, place, manner of execution and other similar conditions.

[6] In cases of rape of a vulnerable person committed in a continuous criminal offense in which it is not possible to specify the number of offenses committed, with the crimes having occurred over a long period of time, the reason for increasing the sentence to a maximum level of 2/3 must be applied.

[7] [3]Portal G1. (2022, January 20). Justiça condena ex-deputado Luiz Sefer a 20 anos de prisão por estupro de criança no Pará. G1. https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2022/01/20/justica-condena-ex-deputado-luiz-sefer-a-20-anos-de-prisao-por-estupro-de-crianca-no-para.ghtml

“bad behavior,” he had threatened to send her back to her family. In court, he argued that the charges were fabricated because the girl feared losing the “so-called good life” and “privileges” she had while living under his care. Finally, he alleged that the girl had already been raped by her biological father before coming to live with him, though he did not explain how he came to this conclusion r why this was even an argument in the first place.

However, two women experts in forensic examination in suspicious cases of sexual abuse against minors, attested that the girl presented injuries characteristic of previous sexual violence, as stated in the report prepared; They heard the teenager report that she had suffered both vaginal and anal sexual abuse; (. . .) That the teenager said that the person who did those things to her was the owner of the house where she lived, who was Deputy; That at no time did the teenager say that she had been abused by anyone other than the deputy; (. . .) That the questions in which the characteristics (sic) in the letter ‘f’ are included clarify that the victim said she was raped when she was nine or ten years old, and that over time only the scars from the injuries suffered remained; (. . .) that the confirmation of sexual violence is a set of elements that the expert relied on (sic) to affirm, which are the genital alterations and the alterations in the anal region, both of which were present in the expert’s report, with characteristics of antiquity and corroborate the victim’s history. (Pinto, 2019)”

With extensive documentation in more than two thousand pages of the case file, even so, one year after the deputy conviction in the first instance, the Court of Justice of Pará acquitted him in one of its criminal chambers, by a vote of 2 to 1. The Public Prosecutor’s Office appealed to the Superior Court of Justice. The rapporteur of the case, Minister Joel Ilan Parcionik, annulled the court’s decision and reinstated the conviction.

In 2014, he returned to politics as a state deputy, becoming the eleventh most-voted candidate in the state. His son was elected to the Belém City Council as the third most-voted councilman in 2016. By 2018, he chose not to run himself, instead securing his son’s election as his political successor, earning a significant number of votes. Meanwhile, the former deputy shifted his focus back to managing his lucrative business ventures, while the legal case against him has now dragged on for eleven years. Today, at sixty-one years old, he continues his life of privilege,

while the girl, whose identity remains anonymous, is around twenty-three years old.

Missing Women

The issue of missing women, particularly in marginalized regions like Marajó Island, is not just a local tragedy, it is part of a broader global crisis. Indigenous women and girls, often living in isolated communities or regions with limited access to justice and resources, face alarming rates of violence, exploitation, and abduction. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by a range of factors, including systemic neglect, poverty, and deep-seated social inequalities. In Marajó, many of the women who go missing are descendants of indigenous peoples, and their disappearances are often linked to organized trafficking networks that prey on their desperation, as well as the lack of state presence and oversight.

In 2014, a parliamentary inquiry commission found that the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents on the island of Marajó is the worst in the country, especially the exploitation of Indigenous children and children coming from riverside communities. The best-known trafficking routes are those of the river ferries, which 'transport' children from one municipality to another across the island's many waterways and to the state capital Belém, as well as to other states. Many of the victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation but the region also has a high concentration of children being trafficked for forced labor in the fishing and tourism industry, as well as for domestic servitude (UNODC, 2017).

One of the most tragic recent cases was that of 2-year-old Eliza Rodrigues[8], who disappeared on September 16, 2023, from a community in Anajás, Marajó. Despite a concerted search by local authorities, family, and volunteers, Eliza's fate remained unclear for months. Two suspects were arrested, one of whom, Renan Braga da Silva, later confessed to seeing Eliza before he allegedly sold her for just 1,000 reais (roughly 163 USD). During a police reconstruction of the crime, Renan managed to escape but was later recaptured, only to die under suspicious

[8] G1." *Suspeito de envolvimento em desaparecimento da criança Elisa Rodrigues é preso no Marajó*. G1 Pará, 13 Mar. 2024, https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2024/03/13/suspeito-de-envolvimento-em-desaparecimento-da-crianca-elisa-rodrigues-e-preso-no-marajo.ghtml.

circumstances in police custody.

The case gained national attention, particularly after Aymeê's song "In Marajó, John Disappeared," went viral, bringing the island's ongoing crisis to a wider audience. This prompted Brazilian journalist Roberto Cabrini to investigate the situation on the ground. Cabrini's documentary "The Other Side of the Island (2024)"[9] sheds light on the exploitation and trafficking of children in Marajó, showing the deep anguish of Eliza's family. In interviews, Eliza's grandmother revealed that Renan had confessed to selling the child to a man named "Fabiano," a chilling detail that underscored the depth of the trafficking network operating in the region.

Eliza's case and Cabrini's documentary bring much-needed visibility to the issue of missing and exploited women in Marajó, particularly those from indigenous communities. Local protests in Anajás, calling for justice for Eliza, highlight the growing public demand for accountability and reform. However, the broader problem of trafficking, exploitation, and violence against women and children on Marajó Island remains largely unaddressed.

[9] Cabrini, Roberto. *Do outro Lado da Ilha*. "Roberto Cabrini investiga as denúncias de exploração de crianças na Ilha de Marajó." *Domingo Espetacular*, 2024. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Ne8k6FBuM.

The Claims of Fake News Around Marajó Island

Since Aymee's song[10] publicly denounced the issues of sexual exploitation and human trafficking on Marajó Island, there has been a wave of reactions. Many have supported her message, yet some are questioning her understanding of the situation, claiming that, because she was born in the state, she cannot fully grasp the gravity of what she's singing about. However, Aymee's connection to the region makes her a powerful voice for this cause, and her song has been an essential platform to shine a light on an issue that many would rather ignore.

Alongside this, public figures like Damares Alves, former Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights under the Bolsonaro government, have made controversial statements, particularly about the exploitation of the "balseira" girls. Critics argue that Damares is using the situation to create "moral terror" rather than genuinely help the community. Yet, what's striking is that these same critics, like Observatório do Marajó[11], are also using a form of "moral terror" in their own rhetoric. While they attack Damares for fueling panic, they themselves are making alarming claims, such as suggesting that drawing attention to the abuse might lead to abusers coming from other parts of Brazil to Marajó. This statement was: "*Criminal networks involved in child sexual exploitation and human trafficking drive mobilizations that draw attention to regions with institutional vulnerabilities, like a whistle to call criminals to these areas.'"* This line of reasoning, implying that speaking out about the abuse might make things worse—mirrors the very moral panic they accuse Damares of creating. Both sides, in different ways, are using fear to avoid confronting the reality of what's happening on the island.

For example, Observatório do Marajó also stated: "Criminal networks involved in child sexual exploitation, human trafficking, organ trafficking, illegal logging, and more operate in Marajó, the Amazon, and across the country." While this is a factual statement, it was posted in the wake of Aymee's song, and while it's true that these crimes are widespread, this argument does little to address the specific crisis in Marajó. Moreover, they claim that addressing these

[10] Aos Fatos." Música de Aymee Rocha sobre realidade gospel em Marajó gera polêmica com Damares. Aos Fatos. 2024, https://www.aosfatos.org/noticias/musica-aymee-rocha-reality-gospel-damares-marajo/.
[11] "Lunetas." *Exploração sexual de crianças não acontece só na Ilha do Marajó*. Lunetas, 2024, https://lunetas.com.br/exploracao-sexual-de-criancas-nao-acontece-so-na-ilha-do-marajo/.

abuses might “encourage abusers from other parts of Brazil to come to Marajó.” This line of reasoning, implying that speaking out about the abuse might make things worse—mirrors the very moral panic they accuse Damares of creating. Both sides, in different ways, are using fear to avoid confronting the reality of what’s happening on the island.

What’s even more concerning is how some individuals are framing the discussion to silence those speaking out. A claim made by Observatório do Marajó stated that these allegations might be fueling “moral terror,” suggesting that drawing attention to the situation could attract more criminals. This argument seems to contradict itself: on one hand, they claim the situation is being exaggerated, but on the other hand, they suggest that speaking up is dangerous and could invite further exploitation. This rhetoric is rooted in silencing voices, reinforcing the idea that "speaking out might bring harm" and labeling those who denounce the violence as responsible for making the situation worse.

This is a classic example of using fear and misinformation to prevent action. By labeling whistleblowers as criminals who “attract” further abuse, the conversation is steered away from the real issue: the ongoing sexual exploitation and human trafficking happening in Marajó.

Marajó's situation is not just a reflection of poverty but of the ongoing effects of colonialism and patriarchal structures that continue to shape social and political relations in the region. The exploitation and abuse of women and children on the island cannot be reduced to a simple case of poverty or criminal networks; they are embedded in broader systems of inequality and neglect. To provide a comprehensive overview of the ongoing situation, including the discourse around fake news and the developments in investigations, including the loss of individuals involved in the investigations, I have constructed a timeline that outlines the most significant events on the island from 2006 to 2024. This timeline is presented in the Appendix of this thesis for further reference.

In conclusion, to truly address these issues, we need a comprehensive and integrated approach that includes not only effective public policies but also the enforcement of human rights and adherence to international legal frameworks such as International Humanitarian Law.

Applying International Humanitarian Law into Brazil's Policy Responses

This section explores how Brazil can align its national policies with international humanitarian law (IHL) and United Nations (UN) frameworks, particularly in addressing the alarming rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Amazon. Despite Brazil's ratification of key international treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), there remains a significant gap between international standards and domestic implementation. The aim is to outline practical steps Brazil can take to bridge this gap and enhance its response to GBV in the Amazon. These include improving access to justice, establishing comprehensive support systems for survivors, and implementing culturally relevant preventive measures. By adopting international best practices and building on the insights of local communities, Brazil can create a framework that ensures accountability, empowers women, and fosters long-term social change.

The integration of IHL and United Nations (UN) frameworks into Brazil's national policies requires a substantial shift in both legal structures and institutional practices, particularly when addressing the pervasive violence against women in the Amazon. One of the key areas of focus is aligning Brazil's domestic laws with international standards on GBV. While Brazil has ratified international conventions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the implementation of these international norms remains inconsistent. Brazil must take steps to strengthen its legal frameworks by not only enhancing provisions for gender-based violence in the national constitution but also ensuring that specific forms of environmental and sexual exploitation, particularly those tied to the Amazon's land and resource conflicts, are included in the definition of GBV (United Nations, 2021; Igarapé Institute, 2020).

Furthermore, addressing the gaps in the legal system will require a concerted effort to build the capacity of local authorities and organizations within the Amazon. The vastness and isolation of the region, compounded by a lack of access to legal services, make it difficult for women to seek justice. By establishing local networks and ensuring that legal processes are both accessible and responsive to the unique needs of women in remote areas, Brazil can begin to bridge this gap. This effort should include training local authorities, legal professionals, and community

leaders to better address and prevent violence against women, creating a more supportive environment for survivors of GBV (Igarapé Institute, 2020).

In addition to legal reforms and local capacity-building, there is an urgent need for comprehensive support systems for survivors. Drawing from international best practices, Brazil should focus on creating holistic support services that prioritize the rights and needs of survivors, including psychological, medical, and legal assistance. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have developed survivor-centered approaches that Brazil could adapt and implement to ensure that women have the resources and support they need to rebuild their lives. This kind of support network could empower survivors to seek justice and heal- ing, and contribute to the broader fight against gender-based violence in the region (UNFPA, 2022; WHO, 2021).

Preventive measures are equally crucial. Violence against women is often rooted in deep-seated social norms that normalize gender inequality and violence. Public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives are essential tools in challenging these norms, particularly in both urban and rural Amazonian communities where violence is frequently overlooked or underreported. Programs that educate both men and women on gender equality and the rights of women could help change these attitudes over time. Furthermore, the involvement of local civil society organizations, including indigenous groups, would be key in ensuring that these efforts are culturally relevant and deeply embedded in the community. These groups have invaluable insights into the region's unique social dynamics and can contribute to the design and implementation of more effective, localized strategies (Igarapé Institute, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2022).

In light of the complexity of the crisis, particularly the involvement of powerful political and corporate actors in perpetuating violence against women, international support and accountability mechanisms will play a vital role. Organizations like Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI), and the Igarapé Institute can provide much-needed external pressure on the Brazilian government to fulfill its commitments under international human rights frameworks. By leveraging the expertise of these international human rights organizations, Brazil

can be held accountable for addressing the gender violence crisis in the Amazon (HRW, 2022; AIAmnesty International, 2022).

By applying the principles of international humanitarian law and the UN's frameworks on gender equality, Brazil can take meaningful steps toward ensuring justice for women and girls in the Amazon. These frameworks provide a strong foundation for addressing violence and exploitation while also emphasizing the need for gender equality in all sectors of society. Moreover, by placing women at the forefront of these efforts, Brazil can not only work toward curbing violence but also empower women to become leaders in the broader fight for environmental protection and human rights in this critical region. The intersection of environmental destruction, gender violence, and systemic inequality in the Amazon calls for a comprehensive response that recognizes the unique role women play in both sustaining the environment and driving the social changes needed to break the cycles of violence (United Nations, 2021; Igarapé Institute, 2020).

Two Islands, One Country, A Model of Success to Follow: Fernando de Noronha Island Protocol and a Potential Guide to Marajó Island Development

In this section, I compare the development trajectories of two Brazilian islands—Fernando de Noronha and Marajó, to illustrate how one can serve as a model for the other. This is not about reinventing the wheel but about building on the sustainable practices and governance successes already implemented in Noronha to address the challenges faced by Marajó. By doing so, we can explore how proven strategies can be adapted to empower local communities, protect the environment, and foster inclusive growth in Marajó.

The two Brazilian Islands, Fernando de Noronha (Noronha) and Marajó, share outstanding natural beauty and tourism potential but follow very distinct paths in terms of development, governance, and social impact. While Noronha has become an international example of sustainable tourism, Marajó struggles with poverty, territorial exploitation, and violence affecting its population. Here, I propose that the practices adopted in

Fernando de Noronha could serve as a model and inspiration for the socioeconomic development of Marajó, with an emphasis on the transformative role of sustainable tourism.

The Fernando de Noronha Archipelago, of volcanic origin, has a management system inter-nationally recognized for its sustainable tourism practices. Governed by the Territorial Autarchy of the State District of Fernando de Noronha (ATDEFN), the island received, in April 2024, the Green Destinations certification in the bronze category from the Green Destinations Foundation. This recognition reflects efforts in environmental preservation, cultural appreciation, and balanced tourism development.

This success is not by chance. It is the result of the Local Development Program (DEL) Tourism, implemented by the Fecomércio System of Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte, through the National Service for Commercial Learning (Senac). Senac played a crucial role in strengthening professional training and promoting local socioeconomic development. According to Bernardo Peixoto, president of the Fecomércio/PE System, Noronha has become a global reference and can inspire other regions to adopt responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

Moreover, Noronha is protected by a network of Conservation Units (UCs), ensuring the preservation of its biodiversity. The zoning established by the Management Plan organizes the sustainable use of resources, balancing tourism, environmental conservation, and quality of life for its residents.

The Legal Amazon also has Conservation Units (UCs), with 43% of its territory protected in these areas, but faces significant challenges in implementing sustainable practices across its entire expanse. Marajó Island, part of this region, is especially vulnerable. Despite its rich biodiversity and unique culture, the island suffers from alarming poverty rates, sexual exploitation, and social inequalities.

Just like Noronha, Marajó has untapped potential to transform into a sustainable tourism destination that values its biodiversity and empowers its population. The experience of the Rio Negro Sustainable Development Reserve (RDS) in the Amazon shows that it is possible to align en- environmental preservation with the valorization of local communities through initiatives such as handcrafts, community-based tourism, and sustainable entrepreneurship. This approach could be adapted to Marajó, with the support of entities like Senac.

Senac (National Commercial Training Service), present throughout Brazil, is a key player in transforming Marajó's reality. Senac's commercial learning program, which serves young people aged fourteen to twenty-four years of age, could have a dedicated unit on the island, training the local population to work in the tourism sector. This initiative would not only generate jobs but also promote social justice and reduce inequalities.

Sustainable tourism in Marajó could be structured based on the Noronha model. The implementation of a rigorous monitoring system at the island's main port would help track visitors and combat exploitative practices, including human trafficking. Additionally, providing accessible or free public transportation for residents, inspired by the Noronha system, would encourage ethical tourism and reduce costs for the local population.

Implementing a sustainable tourism model in Marajó must include active participation from local residents. Sustainable tourism is also an opportunity to reverse social exploitation in Marajó. Improving public transportation, incentivizing professional training, and implementing strict oversight could create a protective network for children and women, who are currently facing vulnerable situations. At the same time, tourism-based economic development strengthens environmental conservation, creating a virtuous cycle.

Brazil accounted for 43% of all global murders of trans individuals. The Wilson Center also highlights the sharp disparity between Brazil's legislative achievements and the lived experiences of women. For instance, nearly 60% of female homicides in Mato Grosso are classified as femicides, compared to just 8% in Ceará, signaling the need for state-specific, tailored GBV policies.

According to the World Bank's Brazil Country Profile on GBV[12], violence against women and girls (VAWG) is pervasive despite significant legal advancements, such as the Maria da Penha Law (2006). This progressive legislation criminalizes domestic violence and provides protective measures for women. However, Brazil still ranks fifth globally for the highest prevalence of VAWG, as reported in the United Nations' 2015 Violence Map. Between 1980 and 2013, femicide rates rose dramatically, increasing by 252%—from 1,353 to 4,762 femicides annually.

The World Bank acknowledges that Brazil has built a robust legal framework to address GBV yet, enforcement remains a critical challenge. A National Plan to End Femicide, launched in 2021, emphasized the need for multisectoral approaches and coordination across federal, state, and municipal levels. This includes integrating data through the National Policy on Data and Information (PNAINFO) to systematically track GBV statistics and inform targeted interventions. Once again, despite these advancements, severe implementation gaps persist. Budget cuts and inefficiencies have undermined federal GBV programs. For example, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, only 30% of funds allocated to combat violence against women were utilized, leaving BRL 93.6 million (approximately USD 18 million) unspent. This failure left states and municipalities underfunded and services strained.

The Igarapé Institute identifies the Amazon as the epicenter of GBV in Brazil,[13] where intersecting identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, and age, create unique vulnerabilities. Social expectations and the multiplicity of roles women inhabit further compound the risks. Afro-descendent and Indigenous women in particular face disproportionate levels of violence. The Amazon also presents territorial challenges, such as illegal land grabbing, resource disputes, and the increasing presence of armed groups, including militias and drug trafficking factions.

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[12] World Bank. (2023). Gender-based violence country profile: Brazil. Social Sustainability and Inclusion Global Practice, Latin America and the Caribbean Region. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099071723163037876/pdf/P1769790eeb7ed0c80b5e705f557711d627.pdf

[13] Instituto Igarapé. Violência contra mulheres na Amazônia: 5 anos de dados. Instituto Igarapé, Mar. 2024, https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/SC_PT_Violencia-Contra-Mulheres-na-Amazonia-5anos.pdf.

Integrated Recommendations and Next Steps

To combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and address structural inequalities in Marajó Island and the Amazon region, a multifaceted approach is essential. Drawing from frameworks proposed by the World Bank, Igarapé Institute, and ecofeminist principles, I propose the following integrated recommendations aim to ensure sustainable and transformative change:

1, Strengthen GBV Data Collection and Response Mechanisms

I recommend the development of region-specific GBV monitoring systems that disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, and location. This approach would allow for more targeted and transparent policymaking. It is crucial to replace ambiguous classifications like "others" or "unknown" for perpetrators with clear and specific identifiers, such as nationality and affiliations. Additionally, protecting researchers and whistleblowers through partnerships with international organizations and federal guarantees is essential for fostering safer and more transparent reporting environments.

To enhance response mechanisms, I propose expanding the Casa da Mulher Brasileira model to Marajó. These centers, which provide legal aid, psychosocial support, and health services, offer a holistic approach to survivor care. Mobile units, such as adapted boats and buses, should also be deployed to reach isolated areas, providing resources and raising awareness. Furthermore, strengthening the “Ligue 180” hotline to connect survivors with local support networks, especially in cases involving trafficking and exploitation, would greatly improve access to vital services. These steps are integral to addressing GBV effectively and inclusively across different regions.

2. Promote Ecofeminism and Environmental Protection

Integrating ecofeminist principles into public policies on environmental protection can drive meaningful change by directly connecting environmental degradation with gender-based violence. By empowering women to take leadership roles in conservation and adopt sustainable livelihoods, such as eco-friendly initiatives, we address both ecological damage and social inequality. Securing land rights for indigenous and traditional communities is key to reducing violence and protecting biodiversity. The Fernando de Noronha Protocol serves as a model for sustainable development in Marajó, where regulating resource access, establishing conservation zones, and promoting ethical tourism can simultaneously uplift local communities and preserve the environment. Furthermore, training Marajó's youth in sustainable tourism directly links environmental protection to economic empowerment.

3. Enhance Justice Systems and Combat Trafficking

Expanding and enhancing justice systems to combat trafficking is crucial. Strengthening federal oversight and providing support for local systems are necessary to enforce laws like the Maria da Penha Law.[14] Establishing specialized courts, training law enforcement, and adopting survivor-centered approaches will ensure that cases of gender-based violence, trafficking, and exploitation are handled effectively. Law enforcement officials and community leaders should be trained to identify trafficking indicators. In addition, forming local task forces to tackle this issue, in partnership with international organizations, will help disrupt cross-border trafficking networks. Culturally relevant campaigns empowering women and families will also play a key role in addressing exploitative survival economies.

[14] UN Women. *Maria da Penha Law: A Name that Changed Society*. UN Women, 30 Aug. 2011, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/8/maria-da-penha-law-a-name-that-changed-society.

4. Expand Services for Vulnerable Communities

My recommendation to expand services for vulnerable communities focuses on making these services more accessible and culturally sensitive. This means enhancing health, education, and social assistance programs for indigenous and Quilombola communities. Expanding the CREAS [15]network will provide integrated psychosocial care and referral pathways for survivors. To break down structural barriers, we need investments in renewable energy, better river transport, and digital connectivity. Finally, we must protect women's human rights defenders. A National Plan for their safety should include secure housing, financial aid, and transparent investigations into threats. This would reaffirm the state's commitment to justice and solidarity with activists.

With that, my next steps regarding this research project are as follows:

I will build partnerships with local NGOs by presenting this work to organizations already active in Marajó, fostering collaboration to strengthen initiatives. I plan to visit all 16 communities on the island to gain firsthand insight into their realities, particularly regarding access to resources and vulnerabilities. I will explore transportation dynamics, studying how boats connect communities and impact service delivery and support systems. Additionally, I aim to examine housing conditions to understand how infrastructure, safety, and environmental factors like heat affect daily life.

I also seek to understand what vulnerability truly means in this context by investigating the functionality of healthcare and whether citizenship benefits effectively reach residents. Most im-important, I will listen to the voices of the community. Their lived experiences will guide any solutions, as they hold the deepest understanding of their challenges. These steps reflect my commitment to addressing GBV and fostering sustainable development in Marajó through collaboration, observation, and community-driven approaches.

[15] The Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (Creas) is a public unit of the Social Assistance policy where families and individuals who are at social risk or have had their rights violated are assisted.

Conclusion

During this research, I sought to explore the intricate connections between gender-based violence (GBV) and environmental exploitation in the Amazon, with a specific focus on Marajó Island. This journey revealed the multifaceted challenges faced by women in the region, whose lives are deeply interwoven with the social and ecological fabric of the Amazon. Women, particularly those from Indigenous and quilombola communities, endure the compounded burden of systemic violence and environmental degradation. This harsh reality underscores the broader socio-environmental injustices pervasive in the region and highlights the urgent need for intersectional approaches in State investigations and interventions.

Amazonian women face a heightened degree of vulnerability compared to women in other parts of Brazil, due to overlapping factors such as geographic isolation, socio-economic marginalization, and cultural stigmas. If these disparities persist without adequate State action, international bodies such as the Organization of American States (OAS) may be compelled to intervene, as they did in the landmark Maria da Penha vs. Brazil case. Such actions are triggered when it can be demonstrated that the State has exhausted its resources or failed to act sufficiently to protect human rights.

This research also highlights the challenges posed by the prevalence of misinformation and fake news, which often overshadow efforts to identify and address cases of violence. Moving forward, a critical priority must be the formal recognition of GBV in the Amazon as well as the exploitation of minors at Marajó as both truth, and that has been persistent over time. These severe human rights disrespects must be identified and addressed urgently. Such acknowledgment would pave the way for comprehensive investigations and targeted interventions to safeguard the dignity and rights of women in the region while addressing the ecological exploitation that compounds their suffering.

One troubling aspect I found during this research is the pervasive ambiguity in

categorizing aggressors in reports on GBV. For example, terms such as "Others" or "Unknown by the victim" frequently appear in formal data, especially concerning Marajó Island. Anecdotal evidence suggests that perpetrators include influential politicians, powerful figures, and even foreign actors, yet they are rarely named or held accountable. This omission not only limits the scope of justice but also reflects a deeper culture of impunity and fear among those tasked with documenting and addressing these crimes. It became evident that these systemic issues mirror the broader exploitation of the Amazon, where powerful entities often evade accountability for both environmental destruction and human rights violations.

Another significant finding is the critical role of language in shaping access to information and discourse. Research on Marajó Island in English predominantly addresses environmental issues, public health, and scientific studies, while discussions about tourism, sex trafficking, and GBV are largely confined to Portuguese-language sources. This linguistic divide creates barriers for non-Portuguese-speaking scholars, activists, and policymakers, limiting global awareness and hampering international collaboration on these pressing issues. While exceptional reports by organizations such as the World Bank and the Igarapé Institute have drawn attention to GBV in the Amazon, academic publications in English remain scarce. This dearth of multilingual scholarship underscores the urgent need to expand access to regional knowledge to foster broader engagement, critical thinking and collaborative solutions.

Furthermore, localized strategies are essential for creating tangible change. Building capacity within remote communities to enforce laws and provide survivor-centered support services, such as legal aid, healthcare, and psychological counseling, must become a priority. Preventative measures, including education and awareness campaigns designed in collaboration with indigenous and quilombola groups, are equally vital to challenging the normalization of violence against women. The insights gained from an ecofeminist perspective highlight the interconnectedness of the exploitation of women and nature, underscoring the need for systemic cultural shifts alongside policy reforms.

As I conclude this thesis, I recognize its limitations, particularly the absence of fieldwork

and direct engagement with affected communities. Future research must prioritize field-based studies to better understand the complex dynamics of GBV and environmental exploitation in the Amazon, as well as to uncover the realities behind the "unknown" perpetrators and underreported cases of trafficking. Drawing on the work of scholars like José Miguel Nieto Olivar, particularly in his article "Violence, the State, and Gendered Indigenous Agency in the Brazilian Amazon," where the author directly speak to the readers in his conclusion, proposing that researches continuate his work, this research seeks to complement his findings by exploring additional hypotheses about the high prevalence of GBV in the Amazon and the underlying factors driving it. Nieto Olivar emphasizes the critical intersection of colonization and sexual violence, highlighting the systemic roots of these issues. This study builds on his foundation by proposing further avenues of inquiry to deepen our understanding and move toward actionable solutions.

While this research provides valuable insights, it also acknowledges that there are still significant steps needed to translate these theoretical frameworks into effective actions that can address the structural and socio-environmental injustices faced by women in the Amazon.

The Amazon is more than an ecological treasure, it is a living system deeply tied to the lives and cultures of its people, particularly its women. Protecting the rainforest and addressing GBV are inseparable goals, as the exploitation of one perpetuates the suffering of the other. Efforts by the State of Brazil, such as the leadership of Minister Cida Gonçalves and the revival of key programs like the Casa da Mulher Brasileira (Program “House of Brazilian Women”), signal progress. Yet, these initiatives would benefit greatly from incorporating ecofeminist principles that elevate the voices of local women and align development efforts with the preservation of their environment. Ultimately, this research has shown that Amazon requires urgent and integrated attention. By adopting a gender-sensitive approach to IHL and ecofeminism, Brazil and the international community can create a path forward that champions justice, equality, and sustainability. The women of the Amazon, as defenders of their land, culture, and families, exemplify resilience and deserve recognition, support, and protection.

As we envision a just future, it is imperative to place these women at the center of

solutions, ensuring their dignity and agency are upheld. The Amazon, in its ecological and feminine essence, calls for a holistic response, one that values its interconnectedness and honors the shared humanity and responsibility of all who depend on it.

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Appendix A: Timeline on the allegations of sexual abuse against minor in Marajó

This timeline traces the significant allegations and investigations related to sexual violence, exploitation, and human trafficking in Marajó Island, Pará, Brazil, from 2006 to 2024. I created this timeline to gain a deeper understanding of the historical context surrounding these issues and the various governmental and non-governmental efforts directed at addressing them. By organizing these events chronologically, I aim to highlight the ongoing struggle faced by the people of Marajó, especially its vulnerable children. This timeline also underscores the roles played by key figures, investigations, and programs, reflecting the complex and urgent need for continued action and accountability in combatting these severe human rights violations.

A.1 Timeline on Allegations of Sexual Abuse in Marajó, Pará (2006-2024)

- 2006
  - April: Dom José Luiz Azcona, emeritus bishop of Marajó, reports cases of adolescent sexual exploitation in Portel, PA, to federal authorities.
  - May: Investigators, including Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh, travel to Pará to probe child prostitution, uncovering local political involvement.
- 2006-2007: Investigator Amarildo Formentini infiltrates child trafficking networks, leading to arrests.
  - December 2007: Formentini dies in a car accident during his investigation.
- 2008: Azcona renews his advocacy, reporting rampant child prostitution across northern Pará. The Senate forms a commission to investigate pedophilia, focusing on Pará.

- 2008-2010: The CPI of Pedophilia investigates child exploitation in Pará, highlighting local authorities' complicity.
- 2012-2014
  - 2012: Testimony by Marie Henriqueta exposes exploitation in Marajó, implicating local authorities.
  - 2014: The CPI report outlines urgent measures to address exploitation in Marajó.
- 2018-2022
  - 2019: The "Abrace o Marajó (Embrace Marajó"" program was launched under President Bolsonaro to aid families in the region, but it has faced criticism.
  - 2022: Lula is re-elected president.
  - 2022: Damares Alves claims significant child exploitation in Marajó, though her statements face local opposition.
  - October 2022: Azcona criticizes Alves' exaggerated portrayal of Marajó's situation.
- 2023-2024
  - September 2023: President Lula replaces the "Abrace o Marajó" program with "Cidada- nia Marajó" to address regional issues more effectively.
  - 2023: Damares Alves faces legal action for spreading false information about child trafficking in Marajó.
  - November 2023: Gospel singer Aymeê performs a song drawing national attention to child trafficking in Marajó.
  - November 2024: Dom José Azcona passes away, leaving a lasting legacy in the fight against child sexual abuse in Marajó.