

IAF BUSINESSES AND INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)
Interactive Presentations - IAF BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (IP)

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THE QUILOMBOLA CONFLICT AND THE ALCÂNTARA SPACE CENTER (CEA): THE GENERAL
ATTORNEY OFFICE (AGU) MEDIATION EXPERIENCE IN RESOLVING THE CONFLICT AND
ITS IMPACTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES IN THE BRAZILIAN SPACE SECTOR

Abstract

The Alcântara Launch Center (CLA) was established in 1983 through the expropriation of an area of 520 km² in the city of Alcântara, Maranhão. In 1986, the compulsory relocation of the affected families began to the so-called "agrovilas" or housing complexes. In the expropriated area, there were 503 families, distributed among a total of 48 communities. The relocation of the communities led to a series of complaints, as they were moved to remote areas along the coast with restrictions on movement and access to natural resources and livelihoods imposed (Costa and Barbosa, 2022). The complaint was submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) in 2001. The subject of the complaint relates to Brazil's international responsibility for affecting the collective heritage of 152 Quilombola communities in Alcântara. This stems from the failure to issue land ownership titles, the establishment of an aerospace base without proper consultation and prior consent, the expropriation of their lands and territories, and the lack of legal remedies to address this situation (CIDH, 2022). In April 2023, the Brazilian State, through the Attorney General's Office (AGU), officially acknowledged that it violated the property rights and legal protection of the Quilombola communities in Alcântara (MA). Following this recognition, an Interministerial Working Group was established under the coordination of the AGU. Its purpose is to explore alternatives for the territorial titling of the Remaining Quilombo Communities in Alcântara. In other words, the aim is to construct a solution that reconciles the interests and rights of the communities with the development of the Brazilian Space Program (PEB). On the side of the communities, reconciliation implies territorial titling. On the side of the Brazilian Space Program (PEB), there is an advocacy for expanding the area of the CEA to enhance the capacity for the development of commercial launch activities. The non-resolution of the conflict, which involves a governmental decision, creates legal uncertainty for calculating private investments in Brazil. In addition to the interests of both parties, the governmental decision must consider the public interest, which is also expressed in concerns for social and environmental issues.