

The Past alive!

The background:

The Foundation ODESC (Organisation for Sustainable Development) is a small NGO founded by volunteers in 2003, based in the city Barroso, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. ODESC is a member of the Brazilian Forum (FBOMS), the Brazilian Network for Environmental Justice (RBJA) and the Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance and Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).

ODESC makes people aware about incineration in cement kilns and is also fighting simultaneously on legal matters against the incineration of hazardous waste which are made in Brazil. She is the only NGO in Brazil which has a modest independent, general knowledge about the entire process of burning hazardous waste in cement kilns in Brazil.

That is why the protest and the indictment by the Public Prosecutor has become a necessity and a duty for all who respect the mental and physical well-being of all living beings and want to retain sustainable development.

The indictment focuses against the Swiss multinational Holcim, which in Barroso burns at least a cocktail of as many as 150 different types of hazardous residue( HR) in a 50-year-old cement kiln ( cimenteira )to produce cement.

The protest:

Most of the cement plants in Brazil are located in the middle of densely populated areas, such as the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte (1.5 million inhabitants), the capital of Minas Gerais. Minas Gerais is the largest cement producer in the country, while it is the largest incinerator of HR in Brazil. It is a state which is larger than France with around 40 million inhabitants.

In contemporary Brazil, production of industrial waste will only continue to increase with economic growth offering more lucrative business opportunities for cimenteiras. They achieve a doubly profit from the incineration of HR: using waste as fuel and at the same time, being paid to exterminate them in a cement kiln.

Exterminate chemical waste in Brazil is a highly profitable business, where + / - 70% of the Brazilian chemical waste is still being dumped in landfills.

ODESC came to protest openly after the coordinator had conducted an investigation, because of complaints from the residents of the neighbourhood Rosário around the cement plant HOLCIM. The residents had symptoms such as difficult breathing, smell and inconvenience of a white substance, depression, aggressiveness, heart conditions, allergies, etc.

The outcome of the investigation<sup>1</sup> was:

- The cimenteira Holcim burns different kinds of hazardous waste in its cement kiln. That was until 2004 April unknown to the community. Officially it started it in 2002. Unofficially in 1995!

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<sup>1</sup> Holcim S.A. brincando de Deus

- Several environmental proceedings are skipped, such as: participation of the population, public debate about what burning of hazardous waste means, consent of the Mayor without consulting the municipal council, etc.
- Environmental taxes on incineration of waste is circumvented.
- There is illegal transportation and burning of waste in Barroso, and there is also illegal deposited waste in Barroso.
- Large multinationals in no time are obtaining licences to burn their waste in Barroso.
- Several security measures at the workplace are ignored, a labour inspector of the region is transferred.
- The company never take diagnoses related to accidents in the processing of hazardous waste at the plant. Accidents have never happened officially in the processing of the waste.
- The "elite" of Barroso are in full support of Holcim, many of them have all sorts of businesses within the factory.
- Increase of other diseases related to environmental pollution in the last 8 years, increasing of breast cancer, thyroid cancer and leukaemia.
- The main activity of the cement plant is waste incineration and not to produce cement.

On 13 April 2004 the members of ODESC decided that there had to come an awareness campaign! An awareness campaign from ODESC came while at the same time the Multinational Holcim S.A. started a campaign against the coordinator and against ODESC. Hard and sad times followed! No one came to help us with the exception of Greenpeace, in the person of John Butcher.

In February 2006 ODESC realized the First Seminar on the Incineration of hazardous Waste of Minas Gerais. The Declaration of Barroso followed, this is a manifest against incineration in Brazil. Since then we have gotten a lot of contacts in Brazil and around the world.

In August 2006 the ODESC participated in Rio de Janeiro in the Workshop: Co-incineration of waste in cement kilns: a vision of environmental justice on the so-called "co-processing". The report is available at the following link: <http://noalaincineracion.org/campanas-locales>  
In March 2007 ODESC conducted the debate on the health risks in the transport, handling and incineration of HR with the participation of researchers from CNSP / FIOCRUZ.

In September 2009 the report: Holcim S.A playing God ( in portugese: Holcim S.A. brincando de Deus) put on paper all the facts about the movement against incineration of HR in Barroso.

The report Holcim S.A playing God, tells the story of a movement in Brazil concerning the incineration in cement kilns. Several layers of the community participated. The report makes clear what happens in the daily life in Brazil when a population is not in agreement with the status quo. Everything happens in David and Goliath proportions, in other words: the fragile community ahead of the state colluded with the industry, in the case of Barroso, with the transnational Swiss Holcim SA.

## The Complaint:

Also on April 2004, the first indictment was filed by the Federal Public Prosecutor. There had been chosen for secrecy to protect the investigation. It is so far the only indictment, which was filed against incineration of hazardous wastes in cement kilns throughout Brazil. After further investigation of ODESC, during the last ten years this indictment has broadened.

The indictment in its entirety is based on the PRECAUTION PRINCIPLE and follows up:

- Against the incineration of hazardous waste in cement kilns in general and against the Swiss HOLCIM Company, in particular, for the burning of various types of waste (+/- 150 types) in densely populated areas, as in Barroso, Pedro Leopoldo and Cantagalo.
- Because of the risk of contamination for living creatures by dioxins, furans and heavy metals.
- Due extraordinary exposure of millions of people to toxic chemicals.
- Against violation of economic regulation. The application of chemical waste as fuel and raw material caused differentiation in the cement market. The state has facilitated the laws so that privileges arose.
- Against cartel formation. Prices of cement will remain high.
- Due to the fact that the company's main activity is the burning of chemical waste.
- Against violation of administrative standards, because economic interest within the state environmental services, eg hiring ex-officers of the cement companies to facilitate environmental licenses.
- Because of the links and / or accelerating environmental licenses for suppliers to the Company. Only Holcim S.A Barroso-MG has licenses for the burning of 150 different residues produced in 36 facilities in 6 Brazilian States, because of intertwining interests within the National Environment Council (CONAMA); An engineer employed by Holcim determines the law in terms of incineration.
- Because of illegal trade: transport companies of politicians smuggle chemical waste to cement companies. Composition, quantity and origin of waste are unknown.
- Due illegally storing of waste in industrial sites.
- Against violation of human rights.
- Against ideological manipulation: incineration of HR is not sustainable.

During the years that followed, ODESC supported the prosecutors with relevant information to help them to streamline the process. At the same time ODESC members suffered various types of oppression and repression, leading the movement into the underground. In mid-year 2011 Holcim S.A announced the expansion of cement plant in Barroso. Neither the City Council nor the prosecutor were moved by the letter<sup>2</sup> that ODESC addressed them in January 2011, reminding them of the increase of risks with the expansion of the factory in Barroso. In August 2012 Holcim S.A started the expansion works<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Incineração em Barroso – Carta aos Vereadores

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.holcimexpansaobarroso.com.br/>

YEAR 2013

On February 7, 2012, after nearly eight years of origin, federal prosecutors announced in a document<sup>4</sup> sent to Valeria Nacif, that the civil investigation concerning the incineration of HR is no assignment of this Ministry. The responsibility of the case will be passed to the State Prosecutor, i.e. the case would be handled in Barroso, the State Prosecutor's Office, where there is already other representations. The reason would be the lack of sufficient facts to proceed at the federal level. This argument of the prosecutor in a process that already has more than 700 pages and currently almost ten years of origin, is not only unconvincing but also paradoxical. The process is composed of several national and international documents on the risks of incineration of HR, as well as several complaints raised by ODESC.

Time passes and so far the State Prosecutor is not pronounced, despite all the efforts of the few remaining members of ODESC.

The ODESC already, for almost ten years is still waiting for a response from the State Prosecutor in Barroso where it all started.

Today there is no doubt that highly harmful toxins are emitted in the incineration process which are harmful to the health of living beings. There are numerous studies showing the relationship between incineration and diseases such as cancer, asthma, heart problems, neurological and pulmonary<sup>5</sup>. **A cement kiln is an incinerator.**

The appeal:

Given the implications of the situation described above, it is clear that cooperation and solidarity between the various authorities, both national and international, is very important for breaking the silence.

The consequences of incineration in Brazil are serious and represent directly and indirectly despair for millions of Brazilians of present and future generations. Incineration in Brazil today is wildly gaining ground and will silently cause countless victims, beyond Brazil's borders. But dioxins, furans and heavy metals do not recognize borders.

Therefore we are looking for support! Support translated into cooperation in exchange of information, on awareness campaigns and research.

International disclosure about what happens to the chemical waste is very important. Unmask the corruption surrounding the incineration as well!!

The ODESC can NOT do this alone!!

But the problem belongs to all of US, as well as the solution !!!

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<sup>4</sup> Promoção de declínio e atribuição, inquérito civil: 1.22.000.000960/2004-99

<sup>5</sup> [http://no-burn.org/downloads/Incinerator\\_Myths\\_vs\\_Facts%20Feb2012.pdf](http://no-burn.org/downloads/Incinerator_Myths_vs_Facts%20Feb2012.pdf)

