



## To the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk

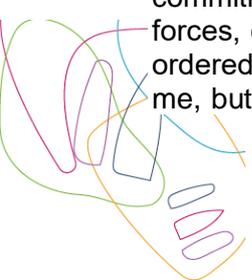
Last March 14<sup>th</sup> marked the fifth anniversary of the murder of my wife, Marielle Franco, and her driver, Anderson Gomes. Marielle had only one year and three months before occupied the position of Councillor in the city of Rio de Janeiro for the Socialism and Freedom Party (*Partido Socialismo e Liberdade – PSOL*, in Portuguese), after an election that won hearts and minds, revamping the agendas of women, of Black people, of LGBTQI+ people, of the *favelas*.

Since that day, March 14, 2018, I wake up counting the time. It has been over 1,840 days without answers and without truly understanding what happened that night when my wife did not come home for dinner. This is a time filled with nostalgia but also filled with a relentless struggle to denounce the lack of answers regarding this most brutal crime. The year 2018, when Marielle was killed, came in the wake of the parliamentary coup that had removed Dilma Rousseff from the presidency, making it clear that our fragile, young democracy was at risk. The consequences would be even harsher: Brazil elected as president a reminiscent of the Civil-Military Dictatorship and sycophant of torturers. Jair Bolsonaro before becoming president was already known for his hate speech and his misogynistic, racist, and LGBTphobic statements. A despicable man with no appreciation for democracy.

As it should not be hard to imagine, the last 5 years have not been easy, both in terms of my personal life and the lives of all the Brazilian people. I, like Marielle, grew up in the Maré Slum, one of the largest slums (*favela*, in Portuguese) in Rio de Janeiro, where justice is an idea far from being true in practice; where public security agents see us as enemies. The Brazilian realities and complexities in some cases seem fictional, and I will describe here an episode to illustrate. In these 5 years, March 14<sup>th</sup> has been marked by a real pilgrimage through all the State organs and agencies that are responsible for providing us with answers about the motives and circumstances of this crime. On March 14<sup>th</sup> of last year, I was, together with other family members of Marielle and Anderson and civil society organizations, with the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Claudio Castro. Beside him was the then State's Civil Police Secretary, Allan Turnowski, who was introduced to us by the governor himself as his trusted man, thus guaranteeing that the investigation would be overseen by the government's best.

A few months later, Allan Turnowski was arrested for participation in misdemeanors, corruption, and “*jogo do bicho*”, a “gambling game” that is connected to an illegal betting scheme historically associated with other criminal activities. The investigation revealed an exchange of messages between Turnowski and another chief officer of the Civil Police – who was also arrested for negotiating bribes to interfere in investigations. These messages, besides revealing the use of the police structure to stage false operations, contain passages in which the death of my wife is treated with evident mockery and contempt. They also show that Allan Turnowski was a great admirer of Ronnie Lessa, accused of being the gunman who killed Marielle and Anderson. Ronnie Lessa and Élcio Queiroz – who is accused of being the driver who was driving the shooter's car – have been in prison since 2019, and have yet to be brought to trial.

You must agree, in view of accounts like this, that it is hard to believe that there is any kind of commitment or endeavor on the part of the State Government, the Governor, and his security forces, or that there is any political will to answer the question that haunts me every day: “Who ordered the killing of Marielle, and why?” The Brazilian State owes these answers not only to me, but it also owes them to all the family members of Marielle and Anderson, it owes them to





the Brazilian people, it owes them to the international community. This crime, this brutal execution, was a grave violation of Human Rights and an attack on Brazilian democracy, as well as having turned into a clear message of what the power of the militia in Rio de Janeiro has become. It is also an attack on everything Marielle was, for what she fought and represented. This collective struggle for answers is the struggle of women, of Black and LGBTQIA+ people, it is the socialist struggle, it is the struggle of the *favela* for social justice and equality.

A fact that characterizes well the governor of Rio de Janeiro is the following: 3 of the 5 deadliest massacres ever carried out in the state of Rio de Janeiro, were carried out in Claudio Castro's administration, between 2021 and 2022. In part, the 2022 elections gave us a breath of hope, with the victory of democratic sectors at the national level. But in Rio de Janeiro, the situation remains critical. Violence against women continues to increase and the blood of the poor and Black people flows through the alleys and lanes of the *favelas* and impoverished regions.

In order not to speak only of denouncements, I would also like to tell you about the positive signs arising from the current federal government, after the victory of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in the last elections. President Lula has always shown himself to be an ally in the struggle for justice for Marielle and Anderson. The appointment of Anielle Franco, Marielle's sister, as Minister of Racial Equality, is undoubtedly a sign of commitment to the elucidation of the case, to memory, and democracy. President Lula's statements became effective when the Minister of Justice, Flávio Dino, demanded the opening of an inquiry by the Federal Police to investigate the murder of Marielle and Anderson, in collaboration with the authorities of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

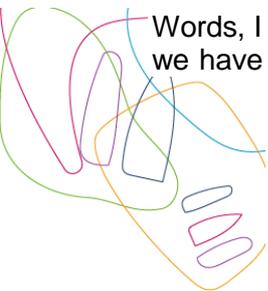
I have regained some hope for answers, Mr. Volker Türk. Thanks to President Lula, March 14<sup>th</sup>, a day so painful for us, now has a name for the Brazilian people: it is the "Marielle Franco National Day for Confronting Race- and Gender-Based Political Violence."

There is no justice without memory, and without memory, there can be no production of truth either. To have no answers is to have no way to signify the pain. I do not know who had Marielle killed, or why. I do not know exactly what happened to the person I loved most in my life. Pain and questions are everlasting. But I continue to fight for new air to blow over Brazil and for justice to be done so that nothing like this ever happens again to anyone in this country.

There is hope that justice will bring peace. A justice that fights for reparation. A justice that seeks the answer so that we do not spend another year revisiting this pain and still asking: Who had Marielle Franco killed, and why?

For justice to be done, Mr. Türk, we will need the persistent support of the international community, and this Office of the High Commissioner in particular. I therefore respectfully request that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights send a communication to the Brazilian State inquiring about the progress in the investigations into the perpetrators of the crime, with particular attention to the progress of the work of each State body and agency responsible for its elucidation – the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, the Civil Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Rio de Janeiro, and also the Federal Police of Brazil. I understand, Mr. Türk, that in addition to the Brazilian State itself, the internal bodies and agencies of our justice system also need to understand that there is a deep international demand for solving this crime. I also ask, Mr. Türk, that you include a reference to the murder of Marielle Franco and the duty to elucidate it in a future statement on behalf of this Office of the High Commissioner.

Words, I believe, have power. And your words can mean another step in advancing the struggle we have been waging since March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, which is also a struggle for democracy in Brazil.





There will be no full democracy in our country until the Brazilian State answers who ordered the killing of Marielle, and why.

Thank you in advance for your attention.

Cordially,  
Monica Benicio.

