



Brazilian Speleological Society

Founded in November 1st, 1969

Brazilian Representative at the International Union of Speleology (UIS) – www.uis-speleo.org
and the Speleological Federation of Latin America and the Caribbean (FEALC) – www.fealc.org
www.cavernas.org.br sbe@cavernas.org.br



To the international speleological community,

BRAZILIAN CAVES IN DANGER – CALL FOR HELP

Dear cavers, speleologists, and cave lovers around the world,

The Brazilian Speleological Society (SBE), on behalf of the entire Brazilian speleological community, hereby ask for your personal and institutional support to pressure the Brazilian authorities for the revocation of the Federal Decree N.º 10,935 that has just been published to facilitate the destruction of Brazilian caves.

Brazil's cave protection legislation was once a model shining to the world. The decree N.º 99,556, dated October 1st, 1990, provided relevant protection of natural cavities in the Brazilian territory. About two decades later, the Federal Decree N.º 6,640, dated November 7, 2008, weakened the protection of our caves. On that occasion, the few people from the speleological community who were called upon to give their opinion on studies promoted by the government, unfortunately, did not shared the SBE aims and did so on behalf of the mining companies, that is, in favor of the destruction.

Among other dubious points, such decree established criteria for the classification of caves according to their degree of relevance (maximum, high, medium, or low). Since “detailed studies” could prove, for example, that a cave is of low relevance, it could be destroyed without any environmental compensation. However, caves were classified as of maximum relevance, and their area of influence had their protection guaranteed.

Despite this decree has been harmful to the Brazilian speleological heritage, on January 12, 2022, we were surprised and astonished by the publication of another one, the Federal Decree N.º 10,935, which revokes the previous one and makes the Brazilian speleological legislation even more fragile. Drafted “in secret” and without any dialogue with the speleological community and environmental civil bodies, it brings several setbacks to Brazilian speleological legislation, such as the possibility of a total or partial destruction of even caves classified as of maximum relevance, when the enterprise is considered of “public utility.”

Another controversial point of this decree is that it gives the right to the Minister of Mines and Energy and the Minister of Infrastructure to interfere and modify the classification of a cave to facilitate the implementation of some enterprises without consulting the competent environmental agencies. Several other negative points are in this new decree. However, these two examples are enough to highlight why we say that Brazilian caves are in great danger.

At the beginning of the year 2022, we continue celebrating the International Year of Caves and Karst 2021, a worldwide project led by the *Union Internationale de Spéléologie* (UIS), which the main purpose is to teach the world about the importance and direct influence of caves and karst in the present and future of millions of people who live in karst areas and are supplied with groundwater. At a time when the whole world is embracing this cause and people are changing the way they see caves and karst, we cannot accept that Brazilian speleological legislation goes oppositely, placing commercial interests above the well-being of the population.

You who are receiving this letter written on behalf of the whole Brazilian speleological community, whether you are a UIS Delegate, current or past UIS Bureau member, a member of a speleological team or federation around the world, a student or professor at a university anywhere in some country, environmentalist, scientist or simply interested in caves and/or environment, please, we would appreciate you to join us in our struggle to have this decree revoked.

You can send a letter to the Brazilian authorities listed on the next page, stating your concern, disapproval, and repudiation with the Federal Decree N.º 10,935, dated January 12, 2022, which will contribute directly to destroying our speleological, geological, archaeological, paleontological, cultural, and historic heritage. You can either write your own text or you can use the suggested one on the next page.



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TEXT SUGGESTION FOR SUPPORT LETTER:

Dear Brazilian government officials,

After becoming aware of the publication of the Presidential Decree N.º 10,935, dated January 12, 2022, we hereby want to join the Brazilian Speleological Society (SBE) and the whole speleological and environmental community to demonstrate our deep concern for the future of the Brazilian caves. Such decree represents a setback in the Brazilian protectionist legislation, which once was a model shining to the world.

As long as this decree is valid, all Brazilian speleological Heritage, as well as all biological, archaeological, mineralogical, paleontological, geomorphological, scientific, cultural, and historic heritages in the Brazilian karst (cave) regions will be in danger because this decree is a tool with high potential to destroy them. We recognize that good enterprises are necessary and important for the economic development and generation of jobs in any region or country.

However, when commercial interests prevail over the well-being of the population and such enterprises are located in areas of priceless natural and cultural heritage, good legislation is necessary to avoid their destruction and to stimulate sustainable development. Therefore, with all due respect and consideration for the Brazilian authorities, we hereby declare our repudiation and total disapproval of Decree N.º 10.935, which we do expect to be revoked.

Brazilian Speleological Society must be invited to help in the elaboration of a new law for the protection of caves and karst because they have the most competent Brazilian experts in this field with a very high international reputation. It is demonstrated by the fact that in 2025 Brazil will host the 19th International Congress of Speleology, which is the most important speleological event in the world, where participants from more than fifty countries will land in Brazil to share the state of the art of speleology, as well as to discuss the protection of caves and karst.

We will be there, for sure, and hope to meet a Brazilian law that takes into account sustainable development, focusing on preservation, not on destruction.

Sincerely,

LIST OF BRAZILIAN AUTHORITIES TO SEND YOUR SUPPORT LETTER.

Names are listed continuously to make your work easier. That way, you can just copy and paste it into the "TO" field in your message. In case you have problems, the same list is in the body of our message to you.

Please, include a copy to: presidente@cavernas.org.br, ja.labegalini@uol.com.br, nivaldo@karinaetiquetas.com.br.

FERNANDO WANDSCHEER DE MOURA ALVES / Secretário Executivo do Ministério do Meio Ambiente se@mme.gov.br; agendase@mme.gov.br;
DANIEL PICOLO CATELLI / Secretário-Executivo Adjunto do Ministério do Meio Ambiente agendase.adjunto@mme.gov.br; **EDUARDO FORTUNATO BIM**
/ Presidente do Ibama presidencia@ibama.gov.br; **JÔNATAS SOUZA DA TRINDADE** / Diretor de Licenciamento Ambiental (DILIC) do Ibama
dilic.sede@ibama.gov.br; **MARCOS DE CASTRO SIMANOVIC** / Presidente do ICMBio presidencia@icmbio.gov.br; **MARCOS AURÉLIO VENÂNCIO** /
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das Minas e Energia chefiadegabinete@infraestrutura.gov.br; **FRANSLEY SOUSA BEZERRA** / Coordenador-Geral do Gabinete do Ministro das Minas e
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agendacasacivil@presidencia.gov.br;

For any question you may have, please, be free to contact us.

Our many thanks in advance for your kind and important cooperation.

José Roberto Cassimiro
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José Ayrton Labegalini
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