Rio de Janeiro residents protest World Cup and Olympics 2011-2016

*Time period notes:* The campaign against the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics ended with the last mega-event, but the protests of Rio residents against human rights violations persists. Protests still occur throughout the city as the state nears bankruptcy.

March 2011 to August 2016

**Country:** Brazil  
**Location City/State/Province:** Rio de Janeiro, State of Rio de Janeiro

**Goals:**
1. An end to forced removals
2. An end to harassment of street vendors
3. The re-opening of the Célio de Barros Athletics Stadium and the Júlio Delamare Water Park
4. A return to the popular use of the Maracanã stadium
5. The regrowth of APA de Marapendi (Olympics golf course)
6. The right to protest without criminalization and the release of political prisoners
7. An end to militarization, favela occupation, extermination of the black population, and police violence
8. Sports as education, health, leisure, not as business
9. The provision of popular housing and facilities on all surplus land from public developments
10. An end to the privatization and gentrification of the Lagoa Rowing Stadium and the Glória Docks
11. The replacement of the Public-Private Partnerships with popular projects for the Marvelous Port and Olympic Park
12. The cleaning of Guanabara Bay and Rodrigo de Freitas and Jacarepaguá lagoons
13. Adequate public transportation free of charge for all
14. The reinstatement of teachers and street cleaners fired for protesting
15. An end to the forced removal of street children from the streets
16. An end to the “World Cup Law”
Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 126. Boycott of government departments, agencies, and other bodies

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 021. Delivering symbolic objects
- 026. Paint as protest
- 028. Symbolic sounds
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike
- 068. Sanctuary
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 126. Boycott of government departments, agencies, and other bodies
- 127. Withdrawal from governmental educational institutions

Methods in 4th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 126. Boycott of government departments, agencies, and other bodies

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 004. Signed public statements
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 020. Prayer and worship
- 024. Symbolic lights
- 025. Displays of portraits
- 026. Paint as protest
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- 123. Boycott of legislative bodies
- 126. Boycott of government departments, agencies, and other bodies
- 174. Establishing new social patterns

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 006. Group or mass petitions
• Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
• Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
• Newspapers and journals
• Records, radio, and television
• Displays of flags and symbolic colors
• Wearing of symbols
• Prayer and worship
• Delivering symbolic objects
• Symbolic lights
• Vigils
• Marches
• Mock funerals: Amnesty International activists delivered body bags to Local Organizing Committee.
• Assemblies of protest or support
• Boycott of social affairs
• Student strike
• Professional strike
• Establishment strike
• Refusal of public support
• Literature and speeches advocating resistance
• Boycott of legislative bodies
• Boycott of government departments, agencies, and other bodies

Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Democracy
Economic Justice
Environment
Human Rights
National/Ethnic Identity
Peace

Group characterization:

• human rights activists
• public workers
• residents of favelas
• students
• teachers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
World Cup and Olympics Popular Committee of Rio de Janeiro
Partners:
Rio Olympics Neighborhood Watch (RioOnWatch), Catalytic Communities (CatComm)

External allies:
Amnesty International

Involvement of social elites:
not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
- Catalytic Communities
- Rio Olympics Neighborhood Watch
- World Cup and Olympics Popular Committee of Rio de Janeiro

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:
- Amnesty International

Segment Length: 11 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Rio de Janeiro State government, Rio de Janeiro municipal government, International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), International Olympics Committee (IOC)

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
not known

Campaigner violence:
Stones throne at police during protest

Repressive Violence:
Police killings in favelas, militarized police, forced evictions, displacement of favela residents, bulldozing homes and neighborhoods, cutting off bus lines to favelas, deployment of tear gas and stun grenades at protests, protestor detainment, excessive use of force, combat-like police operations, power cut offs

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
2 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points

Growth:
3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:
Due to the number of demands made by the Popular Committee, this campaign received a low success rating. This, however, does not mean the campaign was unsuccessful. Many of the demands have not been met because the human rights violations during this campaign are part of a larger trend. Rio de Janeiro has been gentrifying the city long before the World Cup and the Olympics. These events made previously unlawful acts lawful due to the World Cup Law and the implicit state of exception. Campaigns against the government are still being led as problems within the city persist.

The city of Rio de Janeiro is home to 6 million people with approximately 1.5 million residents living in favelas. These residential communities, named after the favela trees native to the region, are commonly misunderstood by outsiders. Although 32% of favela residents belong to the lower-class, a 2013 study found that 85% of people residing in favelas like where they live. Some favelas have high crime rates, but many are high-functioning, self-governing communities.

After Rio was declared the host city of both the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games, favelas faced increasing danger. According to government officials, favelas represented the dark side of Rio, and they sent militarized police units into many communities. A special police force, the Police Pacification Unit (UPP), was introduced to many of the city’s favelas as part of the Public Security department’s “liberation plan” to make favelas safer. In most cases, however, the UPP removed favela residents and relocated them to peripheral areas further from the city.

The majority of Rio’s black population live in favelas. Many favelas, like Providência, have historical roots that date back to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Some favelas are comprised of solid, but illegally built, homes and buildings; however, many favelas lack basic infrastructure, such as plumbing and sanitation services, because they lie outside of city limits. In the 1980s, the Special Zone of Social Interest (ZEIS) was established by the federal government to protect and legitimate established favelas. Rio’s favelas became disconnected from the city because of their lack of resources and have subsequently been infiltrated by the drug trade. The goal of the UPP was to liberate favela residents from the drug trade but instead, residents claimed they were abused by the militarized officers.

On 15 June 2012, the Law of World Cup of Brazil was passed, allowing the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) to profit off the World Cup without having to pay taxes. The World Cup Law was also invoked during the Olympics, which made human rights violations lawful in preparation for the event. Mega-events, like the World Cup and the Olympics, resulted in the institution of a “state of exception” in which the Rio State government permitted unlawful regulations to benefit the public good. In Rio, citizens endured forced evictions and housing demolitions throughout the city’s favelas.

From 2009 to 2016, the government destroyed Vila Autódromo, a favela close to the Olympic Park, because the mayor claimed it posed environmental and aesthetic problems. By 2015, nearly 90 percent of the favela’s 600 residents had been evicted by police and had their homes bulldozed to finish construction of the park. On 3 June 2015, militarized police entered the community with the intent of forcibly removing the remaining residents. The initial nonviolent encounter turned violent when police used pepper spray and rubber bullets to break a human chain of approximately 60 people. Residents of Vila Autódromo, like many other favelas, faced government sanctioned power cuts and police occupation. Culture fests and solidarity rallies drew allies from across Rio and demonstrated public discontent towards the municipal government.

The National Network of Popular World Cup Committees established the World Cup and Olympics Popular Committee of Rio de Janeiro, or the Popular Committee, in 2010. The committee was established a year after the International Olympics Committee (IOC) announced Rio as the host city for the 2016 Olympics. The committee was founded to mobilize social organizations, trade unions, and other human rights groups to protect and empower communities affected by mega-events. The Rio Popular Committee was created specifically to protect Rio’s favelas. In preparation for the mega-events, over 30,000 favela residents faced displacement and forced removal.

In April 2011, the Popular Committee submitted a letter of human rights violations to the UN Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing Rights condemning government sanctioned violence and lack of government transparency. To draw global attention to the crisis in Rio, on 12 April 2012 the Popular Committee launched the Mega-Events and Human Rights Violations Dossier.
series and published the first dossier in Portuguese.

In November 2015, the Popular Committee published its second dossier in both Portuguese and English. This 130-page dossier provided updated information on Rio’s state of exception, citing housing, environmental, and public safety violations. According to the committee’s report, 77,206 people were removed from Rio between 2009 and 2015. The end of the report also listed the demands of the committee, which ranged from ending forced removals and favela occupation to ending the World Cup Law. Throughout 2015, nonviolent demonstrations occurred at various locations within the city. For example, on 5 August 2015, a year before the Olympics, the committee organized a march of 400 people to the Games Organizing Committee.

5 July 2016 initiated the “30 Days before the Exclusion Games” campaign. On 27 July, Amnesty International activists placed 40 body bags in front of the Games Organizing Committee building to symbolize the number of people killed by police in May 2014. This act was done in an effort to shed light on the 2,500 police killings in Rio since the city was declared the Olympics host city. Police brutally repressed student-led protests with tear gas and batons on 8 August and arrested nearly 100 people. During the World Cup final in 2014, nonviolent protestors in Saens Peña Square met hundreds of officers in riot gear. Police brutality became common during the World Cup and Olympics.

Other protests erupted across the city when the Rio state government declared a state of calamity in June 2016. Rio de Janeiro residents were angry at the federal government for spending R$44 billion on the World Cup and R$40 billion on the Olympics while Rio could not pay its public servants due to lack of federal funding. Excessive Olympic spending, a component of the state declaration, also resulted in education and health care cuts.

Financial mismanagement led to teacher strikes, which began on 2 March 2016 in protest of a previously requested pay raise. The Rio de Janeiro State declaration exacerbated existing problems and the strike began to represent other issues, including hiring school guards and repairing public school infrastructure. The strike coincided with anti-Olympic protests throughout the city. On 29 June 2016, a peaceful protest at the Court of Justice ended with violence from the Military Police (PM). Many protesters were taken to the hospital after the police used tear gas and batons to suppress them.

Rio protests mirrored campaigns held in previous Olympic host cities, such as Vancouver, Sydney, and Beijing. State and local officials made numerous assurances to the Popular Committee throughout its campaign, but did not keep most of their promises. For example, former Rio mayor Eduardo Paes promised favela infrastructure repairs in preparation for the Olympics. Nevertheless, residents were forced to live amongst raw sewage and watch venues decay after the games. Despite successful transportation improvements to the city’s subway and bus networks, city traffic was still a problem; working-class residents also argued these changes were disproportionate, mainly benefiting Rio’s upper-class residents. The municipal government closed the Olympic Park to the public during weekdays, resulting in its abandonment.

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According to a 2011 study, 63% of Rio residents believed mega-events benefited the city; in 2015, however, only 27% of residents considered the events to be beneficial. Residents expected the Olympics to have a lasting effect on the city’s economy, but instead watched the park turn into a ghost town and fall into disrepair. Six months after the games, the municipal government closed the Olympic Park to the public during weekdays and shut off the power at Maracanã Stadium. In addition, Olympic practice pools were stained orange with pollution and overrun by mosquitoes.

Rio residents denounced the federal and state governments based on claims of government mismanagement and corruption. These grievances followed the November 2016 arrest of the state’s former governor, Sérgio Cabral, who was accused of leading a gang and pocketing money allocated for public projects. This discontent was also fueled by federal investigations of nearly 350 corrupted congressional officials, which began in August 2016.

In January 2017, the state government signed the Fiscal Recovery Plan, which required the state to privatize its water supply as a prerequisite for federal aid. Dissatisfied favela residents argued the State Water and Sewage Utility (CEDAE) plan would make utility bills unaffordable. As of 2017, favela residents continue to face the risk of forced eviction and displacement. The livelihoods of favela residents are threatened by the municipal government’s persistent gentrification efforts and the state
Research Notes

Influences:

The Popular Committee was influenced by past campaigns against the World Cup and Olympics in previous host cities, such as Beijing and Sydney. (1)

Sources:


Bevins, Vincent. 2016. “Six months out from the Olympics rich, not poor, are big winners.” From Brazil. Retrieved Feb. 8, 2017


Additional Notes: