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Collective human rights, expertise, and reparation: Contributions from the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma

Adriana Eiko Matsumoto¹ , Antonio Euzébios Filho² , Bruno Simões Gonçalves³ ,
Catiana Nogueira dos Santos⁴ , Jussara de Souza Silva⁵ , Nilson de Jesus Oliveira
Leite Júnior⁵ 

¹ Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Instituto Saúde e Sociedade, Departamento Saúde, Educação e Sociedade. Santos, SP, Brasil. Correspondence to: A. E. Matsumoto. E-mail: <adriana.eiko@unifesp.br>.

² Universidade de São Paulo, Instituto de Psicologia, Departamento de Psicologia Social e do Trabalho. São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

³ Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Departamento de Ciência Atuariais, Curso de Ciências Atuariais. Osasco, SP, Brasil.

⁴ Centro Universitário Arnaldo Horácio Ferreira, Departamento de Psicologia. Luis Eduardo Magalhães, BA, Brasil.

⁵ Universidade de São Paulo, Instituto de Psicologia, Departamento de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia Social e do Trabalho. São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

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Abstract

This article presents the technical and forensic productions of the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma in contexts of political violence and collective human rights violations, discussing the role that the concept of psychosocial trauma plays in these interventions. It reports six technical and forensic productions carried out between 2022 and 2024, requested by actors within the justice and rights protection systems, in cases involving populations affected by evictions, police violence, environmental disasters, and other violations of rights – almost always occurring in combination. Based on the theoretical framework of psychosocial trauma, collective psychosocial harm was evidenced, manifested in community disintegration and transgenerational impacts, without disregarding psychological suffering. Social determinants of health and disease production were identified and understood dialectically, including housing insecurity and social stigmatization, as well as community organization and collective memory. The analyses demonstrate that political violence impacts not only individuals but also social networks and collective ways of life – supporting the view that psychosocial harm is collective. The practical contribution of this concept underpins the construction of indicators to guide processes of reparation, mitigation, and violence prevention within the social and community fabric. In dialogue with the rights protection system, it is expected to facilitate a more consistent role for Psychology in processes of comprehensive reparation and collective moral damages. Thus, the concept facilitates the production of a psychosocial expertise that differs methodologically, conceptually, ethically, and politically from traditional psychological assessments, surpassing individualism and familism, and offering a critical perspective on the production of violence and psychosocial suffering.

Keywords: Collective human rights; Forensics; Psychosocial report; Reparations.

Political violence and the systematic violation of collective human rights impact entire populations and communities, affecting their ways of life, networks of sociability, systems of belief, and other spheres (Faria & Martins, 2024; Serrano-Mora & Quintero-Mejía, 2022). These processes, produced and intensified by structural inequalities, may result in collective psychosocial harm of various kinds and manifestations – affecting the collective, subgroups, specific segments, and at the individual level.

The psychosocial approach, guided by the concept of psychosocial trauma proposed by social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró, seeks to understand the effects of systematic violence against historically marginalized populations, impacting the social and community fabric in part or in its entirety. This approach considers the production of psychological suffering without reducing the analysis to individual clinical intervention (Euzébio Filho, 2023; Martín-Baró, 1989).

The notion of psychosocial harm (Dobles & Arroyo, 2020) refers to community social relations and to the production of relations of domination and resistance, of trust or mistrust among group members, of the intensification of violence and psychological terror as strategies of police coercion, of polarization and the militarization of social life, among other aspects (Martín-Baró, 1988/2017). Associated with this perspective is the notion of comprehensive reparation and collective moral damages, present in legal contexts involving actions aimed at accountability for human rights violations (Brandão & Albuquerque, 2024; Gonçalves et al., 2024; Moreno et al., 2020).

The technical and forensic production of Psychology draws on regulations of the *Conselho Federal de Psicologia* (CFP, Federal Council of Psychology), such as CFP Resolution No. 06/2019, which establishes guidelines for the preparation of written documents. These regulations, grounded in the ethical-political principles of the Psychologist's Professional Code of Ethics, ensure that the documentary production of Psychology aligns with technical and ethical commitments to the defense of human rights (Conselho Federal de Psicologia [CFP], 2019). However, it is observed that there are still no specific guidelines for cases of a collective nature.

In Brazil, an important example of the role of psychological science in the field of collective rights is *The Krenak Reformatory Case*, in which a psychological expert opinion was developed to assess the psychosocial effects of political violence by the State against the Krenak Indigenous population during the Brazilian military dictatorship (Gonçalves, 2017). The case concerns a detention center built on the land of the Krenak peoples, in the Rio Doce region of Minas Gerais. The Reformatory was a detention center designated exclusively for Indigenous people in conflict with the law. Over four years of operation, it received Indigenous persons from more than 15 ethnic groups, originating from over 11 states. This detention center was part of an action by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office of Minas Gerais, seeking recognition by the Brazilian State of the serious violations of the collective rights of this people (Gonçalves, 2017).

This *Ação Civil Pública* (Public Civil Action) represented a milestone, being the first action brought against the Brazilian State for the crime of genocide, as well as the first collective human rights action in which Psychology was called upon to contribute a psychosocial expert report. The collective nature of this action established an important precedent for the intervention of Psychology in cases of this kind.

In 2016, a second Public Civil Action against the State for the crime of genocide was filed, once again including a psychosocial expert report. Known as *Marãiwatsédé*, in reference to the traditional land of the Xavante group, the action concerned the forced eviction and collective death of Xavante Indigenous people in 1966, following the invasion and occupation of their territory by large landowners (Gonçalves, 2021).

This study's line of argument is anchored in this theoretical framework and in our praxis at the *Observatório do Trauma Psicopolítico* (Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma) across different community contexts. This is an interinstitutional group (Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo and the Federal University of São Paulo – Baixada Santista Campus) focused on the psychosocial dimension of political violence – psychopolitics – and on the violation of collective human rights. Through teaching, research, university outreach, and professional practice, the Observatory develops technical and forensic work grounded in the concept of psychosocial trauma. These initiatives contribute not only to identifying the emerging impacts of such contexts but also to developing actions aimed at strengthening communities, the protection of rights, and psychosocial reparation, within an open and participatory process with the communities.

The concept of psychosocial trauma constitutes one of the foundational and guiding bases of the Observatory's praxis. However, based on work experiences, dialogue with contemporary authors who explore this concept (Barrero, 2011, 2022), and readings in Critical Social Psychology, the term *psychopolitical* is adopted. This term more clearly communicates the political intentionality underlying situations of psychosocial trauma. Thus, the notion of the psychopolitical marks the presence of systematic strategies of domination that provide political meaning and purpose to processes of violence, whose goal is to destabilize individuals, groups, and collectivities for purposes of control and power.

We align ourselves with a collective and critical trajectory that seeks to demonstrate the relevance and role of Psychology in investigating and addressing collective psychosocial harm and possibilities for reparation in contexts of violence and violations. In this regard, the Observatory integrates national and international partnerships that, through networks, have built a theoretical and methodological framework focused on developing concepts, instruments, and assessment tools for collective psychosocial harm. There is also a concern with evaluating and supporting the collective claims of affected communities, as well as preserving their collective memory, established knowledge, and worldviews as part of the process of understanding and advancing pathways toward the reparation of political violence and its collective psychosocial harms.

From experiences in producing psychosocial expert reports in judicial contexts, it becomes evident that there is a need to reflect on methodological alternatives to the traditionally employed model, such as those used in family courts and other formal contexts. While such instances prioritize an approach centered on individual effects and dynamics, the concepts of psychosocial trauma and psychopolitical trauma – that guide the Observatory's praxis – propose a critique of Psychology's methodological individualism, emphasizing the collective dimension of violence and psychosocial suffering.

Thus, this article is an experience report in which we present and discuss the technical and forensic productions developed by the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma between 2022 and 2024, in contexts of political violence and violations of collective human rights. As Mussi et al. (2021) highlight, experience reports emerge as tools to document and analyze developed practices, serving as written records that describe professional experiences and recognize experience as a scientific, theoretical, and practical phenomenon.

The structure of this article is organized as follows: first, we discuss the concept of psychosocial trauma and its implications for analyzing the impacts of political violence. Next, we present the work of the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma and its main initiatives. Then, we describe six experiences of projects developed between 2022 and 2024, highlighting the context of

implementation, objectives, adopted methodology, and key analytical findings produced throughout these works. Finally, we discuss the contributions of this approach for psychosocial analysis of the effects of political violence.

Consequences of Political Violence and the Violation of Collective Human Rights: Psychosocial Trauma

Throughout human history, actions intentionally planned to cause harm to others have been present in different periods. When these acts of violence occur on macroscopic social scales and are motivated by political, ideological, social, cultural, or economic reasons, they constitute, according to the World Health Organization, expressions of collective violence. Although their causes are multiple, collective violence is generally associated with domination exercised by groups or by the State, with political violence representing one of its typologies (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006).

In addressing the topic of violence, Martín-Baró (2003) identifies four constitutive factors: 1) the formal structure of the act; 2) the personal aspect (personal equation); 3) the enabling context; and 4) the ideological background. The latter allows for understanding the social justification and legitimacy that surround violence within a class-based society at a given historical moment. As both a social and individual phenomenon, violence generates psychosocial responses and consequences in victims (Martín-Baró, 1989), which may vary according to subjective and objective aspects of coping. Another important aspect highlighted by the author concerns the heterogeneous nature of the effects of violence.

Acts such as wars and armed conflicts, genocide, community expropriations and forced displacements, civil-military dictatorships, enslavement, and systemic police violence are examples of collective violence that affect individuals and groups, potentially generating traumatic experiences (Euzébio Filho, 2023). Within the biomedical tradition, such experiences are frequently analyzed from an individual perspective, as evidenced in the diagnostic criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which defines this condition as a complex psychiatric disorder resulting from exposure to traumatic events (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Critiques of the PTSD diagnosis, particularly regarding its individualized focus, have been presented by various authors. This approach emphasizes individual symptoms and neglects the social and contextual factors that give rise to traumatic events, thus overlooking sociopolitical aspects, such as dehumanizing social conditions and structural violence affecting specific groups (Blanco & Díaz, 2004). Furthermore, the pathologization of the response to trauma may lead to the medicalization of “a normal reaction to an abnormal situation” (Moreira & Guzzo, 2015, p. 575).

Given the complexity of the impacts generated by political violence, alternative approaches to the medical tradition become necessary (Villagran et al., 2021). In the Latin American context, Martín-Baró (1989) proposed the concept of psychosocial trauma to encompass the psychological and social effects arising from sociohistorical contexts of political violence, which primarily affect – socially and economically –systematically marginalized populations, as well as those actively involved in political conflicts (Euzébio Filho, 2023).

Martín-Baró (2003) identifies three fundamental aspects of psychosocial trauma: 1) its dialectical nature – like other psychological phenomena – related to the complex process of social relations in which the subject is immersed; 2) the possibility of identifying its causes and consequences within the field of social relations, considering not only the subject experiencing the

trauma but also the institutional, group, and individual mediations that perpetuate it; and 3) its persistence over time, affecting both direct victims and their future generations.

The analysis of the psychosocial dimension of political violence, in this context, highlights the collective affects generated in unequal power struggles, characterized by intergroup conflicts and the dehumanization of others (Euzébio Filho, 2023). As Martín-Baró (2003, p. 293, our translation) points out, “psychosocial trauma constitutes the concrete crystallization in individuals of aberrant and dehumanizing social relationships.” Moreover, because it is historical and multidetermined, it manifests heterogeneously within the universe of social relations (Martín-Baró, 1989).

This aspect allows for the understanding that psychosocial trauma does not arise exclusively as a result of a sudden and unforeseen event. On the contrary, it shows that it can stem from a sequence of psychosocial harms resulting from continuous political violence and naturalized injustices, thus defining its psychopolitical nature (Dobles & Arroyo, 2020). This sequence reflects historical processes in which different traumatic experiences may accumulate over time, such as racism, gender-based violence, police violence, and violence against territory, intensifying and complicating the process of psychosocial traumatization (Gonçalves, 2021).

Psychosocial trauma can have impacts at both the individual and collective levels. At the individual level, some effects include feelings of helplessness in organizing daily life, alterations in perception of reality, heightened states of alertness, diminished self-image, and a lack of encouraging perspectives for the future. At the collective level, the consequences affect the social and community fabric, promoting the disintegration of collective identity and memory, the intensification of intra- and intergroup violence, rigidity in constructing the image of the adversary, and heightened distrust in interpersonal relationships (Euzébio Filho, 2023).

Thus, the concept of psychosocial trauma redefines the understanding of mental health, which comes to be seen not as an individual manifestation of a localized dysfunction within the subject, but as a dimension of social and intergroup relationships. This perspective contributes to interventions that consider not only the post-trauma context but also the pre-trauma situation, identifying psychosocial indicators of risk or protection for mental health. Accordingly, the concept of psychosocial trauma broadens the understanding of political violence and its psychopolitical effects, serving as a tool for developing reparation protocols, promoting support networks, and strengthening collective memory, thereby contributing to the reconstruction of the social fabric and the safeguarding of the rights of affected populations (Euzébio Filho, 2023).

Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma: A Proposal for Action in Contexts of Political Violence

Originally conceived in the field of astronomy, observatories have been used in recent decades across various areas of knowledge, including social sciences, health, and education. This wide applicability reflects the polysemy of the term, as well as the typological diversity and multiplicity of purposes, functions, and methodologies employed. According to some authors, this variety of approaches contributes to the absence of a consensual definition, with the concept generally shaped according to the practices in which the observatory is embedded and the perspective adopted by the author (Vieira et al., 2022).

In the human rights field, observatories are initiatives, mechanisms, or organizations aimed at defending these rights, gathering information, producing knowledge through critical reflection, and disseminating data (Vieira et al., 2022). Thus, they can operate as channels for reception and

reporting, as well as monitoring human rights violations in the territories where they are established. Additionally, these spaces enable interventions with communities and social movements and help facilitate popular participation and social oversight in public policy.

In this context, in 2022, the creation of the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma was initiated, through a joint initiative between faculty and researchers from the Institute of Psychology at the University of São Paulo and the Federal University of São Paulo – Baixada Santista Campus. The Observatory constitutes an interinstitutional and transdisciplinary hub for teaching, research, university outreach, and professional practice, dedicated to the study of and intervention in the psychosocial dimension of the effects of political violence – psychopolitics – and collective human rights violations.

Currently, the Observatory includes faculty from the aforementioned institutions, undergraduate and graduate students, psychologists, public policy workers, members of social movements, and other stakeholders interested in the subject matter. The activities carried out are guided by four main objectives: 1) technical production; 2) development of participatory methodologies; 3) implementation of community actions aimed at strengthening social fabric, support networks, collective memory, and territorial coordination to ensure rights; and 4) theoretical production and development of reference materials for work in contexts of collective human rights violations and political violence.

These actions aim to ensure the social function of scientific production, collectively building responses to societal demands, especially those affecting the most vulnerable sectors. The Observatory seeks to establish itself as a space that informs public and collective decision-making in the sphere of social, human, and collective human rights.

Interdisciplinarity, as well as the production of scientific knowledge that bridges the academic world and knowledge generated by collective actors from various areas of society – particularly those organized around advocacy for rights – constitutes a key political horizon for the Observatory. Additionally, it promotes open educational sessions and scientific events in which issues related to the current sociopolitical context, as well as relevant theoretical foundations, are discussed.

Regarding the populations served, since its inception, the Observatory has focused its actions on three main themes: 1) housing, including people experiencing homelessness, residents of urban occupations, victims of environmental disasters, and urban displacement; 2) State violence and police lethality, including family members of victims; and 3) traditional populations and Quilombola communities.

Despite the particularities of each group, the sociopolitical contexts they experience converge around common challenges, especially the psychosocial impacts of political violence and human rights violations.

Experiences of the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma in Technical and Forensic Production: A Brief Overview

Although recently established, the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma has engaged in the development of technical documents in collaboration with institutions from the justice and rights protection systems. Our work focuses on sociopolitical scenarios marked by collective violence, where the psychosocial and psychopolitical approach guides document elaboration. These productions are based on three main axes: 1) the notion of collective human rights as an ethical,

political, and technical guideline; 2) directives established by CFP regulations for the production of psychological documents, as well as theoretical frameworks from Social Psychology, Community Psychology, and related areas emphasizing the construction of collective knowledge and valuing the diverse knowledge and ways of life of the communities and populations involved; and 3) the notion of psychosocial trauma, psychosocial harm, and mental health.

Below, we present the technical and forensic productions developed by the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma between 2022 and 2024. These productions have been categorized according to the nature of the request and the work performed, classified as Psychosocial Study, Psychosocial Technical Report, Technical Statement from Social Psychology, and Psychosocial Forensic Report. Given that some of these experiences have already been published (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024; Leite Júnior et al., 2024; Matsumoto et al., 2024), while others are still in the process of dissemination, we opted to present them in a panoramic manner in the present article. Thus, the following subsections highlight the main aspects of each production, such as the type of work conducted, the context of intervention, the commissioning body, objectives, period of execution, methodology employed, and key results and considerations of the work.

Psychosocial Studies of Urban Occupations

The first works carried out by the Observatory consisted of psychosocial studies conducted in the context of urban occupations in the city of São Paulo, covering a vertical occupation located in the central region of the capital and a horizontal occupation in the southern zone of the municipality. These studies were commissioned by the *Núcleo de Habitação e Urbanismo da Defensoria Pública do Estado de São Paulo* (DPESP, Housing and Urbanism Department of the Public Defender's Office of the State of São Paulo), with the objective of supporting Public Civil Action processes against the repossession of properties or lands occupied by families in situations of social and economic vulnerability.

The context for conducting these studies was the expiration of measures from the *Arguição de Descumprimento de Preceito Fundamental 828* (Motion for Non-Compliance with Fundamental Precept 828), partially granted on June 3, 2021, regarding the suspension of forced evictions, dispossessions, and removals (administrative or judicial) during the COVID-19 pandemic – which, among its tragic consequences, contributed to an increase in the number of people who lost their homes. With an initial expiration date of July 1, 2022, the injunction was extended by Supreme Court Minister Luís Roberto Barroso until October 31, 2022.

The main objective of the studies was to identify determinants of health/illness processes and the promotion or obstruction of mental health among residents, analyzing housing conditions and the effects that the threat of eviction could have on these individuals' lives. Considering that housing is not limited to physical space but also involves subjective and collective dimensions fundamental to emotional stability and organization of life, the studies sought to understand whether the occupations allowed autonomy and dignity for residents and how the threat of removal impacted them both individually and collectively (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

The studies were conducted in distinct periods: the research in the vertical occupation took place between August and September 2022, while the horizontal occupation was studied between September and November of the same year. A mixed methodology was adopted, emphasizing qualitative analysis of participant narratives and combining different strategies for constructing and analyzing information. Through contact and engagement with the leadership of the respective occupations, technical visits with participant observation were conducted by the

Observatory's researchers, in-depth individual interviews were performed, and structured Likert-scale questionnaires were applied. In the vertical occupation, 19 adults were interviewed and 11 children took part in a ludic activity. In the horizontal occupation, 20 adults were interviewed and questionnaires were completed by 79 residents. The semi-structured interview guides addressed four main axes: life histories, experience within the occupation, social relationships, and the impacts of the imminent risk of eviction. For children, the methodology included drawings as conversation triggers to understand their perceptions of housing and stability (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

The results indicated that the life trajectories of residents in the occupations are marked by constant displacements, previous evictions, and lack of access to decent housing. Housing precariousness and a history of State violence emerged in participant narratives as elements that shape their lived experiences. The study found that most residents do not have a history of community rootedness, having experienced multiple relocations throughout their lives, often driven by financial difficulties and forced evictions in other occupations (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

Collected accounts highlighted that prejudice and violence are structuring elements of residents' experiences. Many participants reported being victims of social and economic discrimination, frequently stigmatized as "bums" or "criminals" by neighboring residents and State agents. Police violence was a recurring theme, with most participants from both occupations stating their belief that the eviction would be accompanied by police repression (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

Another aspect identified through narratives was the presence of high levels of anxiety and fear among residents, especially regarding the possibility of forced removal. Following the expiration of the Supreme Federal Court's injunction, the reports indicated a state of constant alert, aggravated by uncertainty about the future. In addition, the effects of these conditions were evident among children and adolescents living in the occupations. Parents reported that their children displayed symptoms of anxiety and insecurity concerning the possibility of eviction, which could compromise the teaching-learning process and disrupt their networks of sociability (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

Despite the psychophysiological manifestations observed, it is important to emphasize that these studies did not aim to validate clinical diagnoses, but rather to understand the perceptions and experiences expressed by residents and recorded in field journals by the research team. Thus, the findings refer to accounts of an environment marked by insecurity and anxiety – especially among community leaders and families – and not to a characterization of psychological disorders.

Despite this scenario of vulnerability, the results also demonstrated that the occupations function as an important protective factor for residents' mental health. For many families, the community experience within the occupations offers a minimum level of socioeconomic stability and psychological security, reducing anxiety and fostering networks of solidarity. The sense of collectivity, shared identity, and political organization among residents emerged as elements contributing to the production of hope and to the struggle for a dignified life (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

The findings of these studies indicated that the removal of these populations would exacerbate (as threats of removal already do) their social and psychological vulnerabilities, contributing to an increase in homelessness and to the deepening of psychosocial suffering. The research reinforces that housing cannot be reduced to a material issue, but must be recognized as a fundamental human right – essential for emotional stability and for building prospects for the future (Euzébios Filho et al., 2024).

Psychosocial Technical Report on the Institutionalization Trajectories of the Homeless Population

The Psychosocial Technical Report was requested by DPESP's Specialized Center for Citizenship and Human Rights, with the objective of analyzing whether the institutional shelter policies implemented in the city of São Paulo promote autonomy, dignity, and the effective transition of the homeless population out of street situations. To this end, the study investigated living conditions in the *Centros de Acolhida* (Municipal Shelters), the psychosocial impacts of institutionalization, and the relationships established between users and the institutions that host them. The study also sought to gather elements that would allow for the formulation of proposals to modify and improve existing shelter policies in the city of São Paulo.

The study was conducted in a context of exponential growth in the homeless population in São Paulo, which at the time accounted for 48,675 people, according to data from the *Cadastro Único* (the Federal Government's Unified Registry). At the same time, DPESP's Specialized Center for Citizenship and Human Rights, along with social movements advocating for and defending the homeless population, recorded a high number of complaints related to institutional shelter facilities within the social assistance network.

This work was carried out between November 2022 and April 2023, adopting a qualitative approach that combined different strategies for the construction and analysis of information. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 36 adults experiencing homelessness, in addition to the collection of 61 responses to structured questionnaires using a Likert-type scale. Field journal records produced by researchers from the Observatory and transcripts from six focus groups were also analyzed. Information was produced within a partner social assistance institution where the Observatory conducts outreach activities, as well as in other social assistance spaces and services located in downtown São Paulo, which the team visited during itinerant outreach activities carried out by DPESP's Center for Human Rights and Citizenship (Leite Júnior et al., 2024).

The results indicated that, despite some isolated positive evaluations of the Municipal Shelters, the predominant perception of these services is negative. It was found that some of these institutions reproduce relationships based on fear and authoritarianism, fueled by prejudices and stereotypes that legitimize institutional violence against the homeless population. The recurrent use of psychological violence as a mechanism of control was observed, along with depersonalized service provision, and staff often lacked adequate training to deal with the diversity of the homeless population (Leite Júnior et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the findings revealed excessively restrictive rules that limit the autonomy of residents, violating their freedom in everyday activities such as eating and hygiene. Additionally, a high turnover rate in the Shelters and arbitrary dismissals were identified, hindering the creation of bonds, compromising the development of social work by technical teams, and reinforcing the sense of non-belonging within the institutions. Another critical issue identified was the difficulty of accessing the formal labor market, as many companies reject applicants who present statements from the Municipal Shelters as proof of residence (Leite Júnior et al., 2024).

The study concluded that the Municipal Shelters contribute little to helping this population leave the streets and, in many cases, reinforce their social exclusion – producing psychosocial harm and failing to ensure key elements such as autonomy, privacy, freedom, agency, physical and psychological safety, and dignity, among others. Regarding the study's final recommendations, it emphasized the need to review and reformulate shelter policies to ensure a model that respects

the autonomy and rights of this population. It also suggested greater investment in dignified housing, following the logic of the Housing First model, which prioritizes the right to housing without preconditions, combined with multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to address individual needs. In addition, the study recommended continuous training for teams working in the Municipal Shelters to ensure a more humanized and less punitive approach. Finally, it highlighted the need to combat institutional violence by implementing oversight mechanisms and promoting the active participation of the homeless population in the formulation of policies that directly affect them (Leite Júnior et al., 2024).

Psychosocial Expert Report on the Case of the Alcântara Quilombola Communities

This work consists of a psychosocial expert report that investigated the impacts of the installation and management of the Alcântara Launch Center (ALC) on the Quilombola communities of the Alcântara ethnic territory, in the state of Maranhão, Brazil. Requested by the *Movimento dos Atingidos pela Base Espacial de Alcântara* (Movement of People Affected by the Alcântara Space Center) and by the organization *Justiça Global* (Global Justice) – the petitioning entities in the case before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) – the expert report aimed to understand the psychosocial harms resulting from the eviction of families in the 1980s, as well as the long-term effects of the ALC's continued presence, including the impact of ongoing threats of new evictions.

The study was conducted in a context involving violations of the collective property rights of 312 families belonging to 152 communities that lacked formal title to their lands. The installation of the aerospace base took place without prior consultation or consent from these communities, resulting in the expropriation of their territories and the absence of judicial remedies to address the situation. Expelled from the territory where the ALC is currently located, these communities were resettled by the military government in *Agrovilas* (agricultural villages) – spaces that are incompatible with their traditional economic, social, and cultural organization.

The expert report was carried out throughout 2023, with a fieldwork phase taking place between February 28 and March 8. The study was conducted by a research team from the Observatory. The methodological process followed a qualitative approach, with fieldwork that included participant observation and semi-structured interviews. A total of 23 individuals were interviewed, including residents of the *Agrovilas* and *Quilombola* communities along the Alcântara coast, who shared accounts of the psychosocial effects of eviction and the ongoing threat of new relocations (Matsumoto et al., 2024).

The findings of the expert report indicated the presence of psychosocial harm, expressed in feelings of insecurity, fear, and social mistrust, psychological suffering, and difficulties in developing life projects. The militarization of the territory, the lack of basic resources in the *Agrovilas*, and the constant threat of new evictions were identified as elements that could contribute to a process of traumatization among the population. Furthermore, the report highlighted the sequential nature of harms and the occurrence of new traumatizations affecting these populations, particularly arising from the management and potential expansion of the ALC. In addition, the transgenerational nature of the damages was a characteristic of the traumatic experience, given the presence of psychosocial effects of this political violence across elders, adults, youth, and children. The study also emphasized the role of collective memory and the resistance strategies of the Quilombola communities in maintaining their identity and fighting for their rights as protective factors for mental health (Matsumoto et al., 2024).

As a final consideration, the report pointed to the need for psychosocial reparation measures, which should include not only land rights and formal recognition of territories but also

public policies ensuring psychological, social, and economic support for the affected communities. Moreover, the report recommended strengthening the political participation of the Quilombola communities and implementing the *Protocolo Comunitário de Consulta e Consentimento Prévio, Livre e Informado* (Community Protocol of Prior, Free, and Informed Consultation and Consent) (Matsumoto et al., 2024).

On April 13, 2025, the IACHR declared the Brazilian State responsible for human rights violations against 171 Quilombola communities in Alcântara, using the Psychosocial Expert Report conducted by the Observatory as one of the instruments that supported the decision. The Court recognized that the installation of the ALC resulted in the expropriation of lands, forced resettlement in inadequate Agrovilas, and restrictions on the right to collective property, free movement, and prior informed consultation. Additionally, it affected fundamental rights such as food, housing, education, and equality before the law. The IACHR concluded that the State failed to regularize land and provide compensation for losses, generating insecurity, injustice, and violations of cultural and economic rights, impacting traditional practices such as religious ceremonies, fishing, and subsistence agriculture (Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2024).

Technical Statement from the field of Social Psychology on the Psychosocial Impacts of the February 2023 Environmental Disaster in São Sebastião, São Paulo

The Technical Statement from the field of Social Psychology was developed by the *Centro de Atendimento Multidisciplinar* (CAM, Multidisciplinary Assistance Center) of the São Sebastião Unit of the DPESP, in partnership with the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma, with the objective of supporting a civil public action for compensation against the municipality of São Sebastião, São Paulo, following the environmental disaster that occurred in February 2023. The investigation focused on analyzing the psychosocial harms and impacts on families affected by the floods and landslides, aiming to understand the consequences of the event for the mental health and social relationships of the affected population.

The study adopted a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach to capture the complexity of the psychosocial impacts of the disaster. A field operation was conducted by CAM together with researchers from the Observatory in a housing complex in the municipality of Bertioga, São Paulo, where many families were relocated after losing their homes. Data collection involved administering a structured questionnaire with a Likert-type scale to 53 participants, as well as participant observation and field journal records capturing the statements and recollections of assistance provided by the Public Defender's Office and during outreach activities in the affected areas.

The results revealed a situation of psychosocial suffering, marked by multiple impacts on the lives of the affected individuals. At the individual level, participants exhibited a constant state of alert, reporting intense fear whenever it rained, difficulties sleeping, and increased use of medication to cope with anxiety. Additionally, many described feelings of guilt and paralysis in the face of the tragedy. At the collective level, there was a weakening of social and community support networks, resulting in difficulties accessing basic rights and exacerbating feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. The forced displacement of the relocated families generated a process of social uprooting, hindering the reconstruction of community ties and increasing uncertainty about the future.

Another relevant finding was the widespread perception that the State failed to provide adequate responses to the crisis. The lack of transparency and participation of the affected population in decisions regarding their future fostered a sense of hopelessness and injustice,

intensifying psychosocial harm. Furthermore, a process of victim-blaming was observed, perpetuated by media narratives and by some professionals working alongside the population, reinforcing stereotypes and justifying state neglect. This dynamic contributed to the stigmatization of those affected and hindered mobilization for rights and reparations.

Based on these findings, the study argued that the mental health of the affected population cannot be separated from the protection of basic rights and the implementation of effective public policies. The study ultimately recommended measures aimed at protecting and repairing the harms caused, including strengthening the Psychosocial Care Network in the municipality, expanding access to fundamental rights such as housing and social assistance, and promoting spaces for community participation in decisions directly affecting the lives of the impacted communities.

Psychosocial Study on the Bamburrall Complex Family Removal Process

The Psychosocial Study was conducted in collaboration with the CAM of DPESP's Central Regional Unit, with the purpose of supporting a civil public action against the São Paulo City Hall, which implemented a process of removing families residing in the Bamburrall Complex, located in the Perus district, under the justification of mitigating structural risks in the territory and facilitating the Municipal Housing Secretariat's Favela Urbanization Program. However, this removal took place without an adequate resettlement policy for the affected population, resulting in a series of psychosocial impacts and human rights violations.

The central aim of the study was to analyze psychosocial risk and protective factors, as well as the impacts on the mental health of residents subjected to the removal process. Methodologically, the research adopted a qualitative design, conducted between June and July 2024 by researchers from the Observatory in collaboration with the CAM team. Information was produced through technical visits to gain familiarity with the community, collective listening sessions with the affected population, preparation of field journals, and individual interviews based on semi-structured guides.

The results indicated that the removal process impacted residents' mental health, generating a constant state of alert, as well as anxiety, fear, and hopelessness. Uncertainty about the future and anxiety regarding the imminent loss of housing disrupted family routines, resulting in psychosomatic manifestations such as insomnia, anxiety attacks, depression, metabolic changes, and worsening of preexisting conditions, including diabetes and cardiovascular disorders. Moreover, the degradation of living conditions in the area, caused by the partial or total demolition of homes, intensified feelings of helplessness and social vulnerability among residents of the affected communities.

Another aspect identified in the study was the impact of the removal on family and community dynamics. Residents reported that losing their homes represented not only a material issue but also the dissolution of emotional bonds and the collective identity built over the years. Children and adolescents were particularly affected by the abrupt disruption of their school routines and the loss of friends and support networks. Moreover, the unhealthy and hazardous conditions resulting from debris and exposed electrical wires in the area increased the physical and emotional vulnerability of residents, generating additional risks, especially for the child population.

The violence inherent in the removal process also emerged as a key finding of the study. Systematic strategies of coercion, threats, misinformation, and excessive use of police force were identified, all aimed at intimidating residents and compelling them to accept compensation agreements considered unjust. Reports of abuse by the Metropolitan Civil Guard and the lack of proper spaces for collective negotiation highlighted a context of systematic rights violations.

Additionally, there was discourse criminalizing the displaced families, which fostered processes of internalized guilt and undermined residents' self-image.

The study's final considerations indicated that the forced removal of families from the Bamburral Complex constituted a form of State violence and a serious violation of human rights, impacting both mental health and collective life dynamics. It was therefore recommended that psychosocial reparation measures be implemented, including dignified resettlement policies, guarantees of transparent and fair collective negotiation, and continued mental health support through the Psychosocial Care Network. Following the completion of the Psychosocial Study, the Observatory's work with the community continued, focusing on coordinating and mobilizing the network to address the mental health needs of local leaders and residents.

Contributions of the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma to the Psychosocial Analysis of the Effects of Political Violence: As Final Considerations

The experiences reported here regarding the technical and expert work of the Observatory in the field of political violence and collective human rights violations provide elements to underscore the relevance and potential of this type of work for psychological science.

First, the contemporary relevance of the concept of psychosocial trauma is evident in the marks left by dehumanizing relationships, such as those observed in contexts of evictions, violence, state negligence, displacement, and precarious living conditions among vulnerable groups. These factors reinforce the thesis that political violence is at the root of psychosocial harm and the process of psychosocial traumatization experienced by these groups.

The results of the studies also demonstrated that political violence generates impacts that transcend the individual, affecting entire communities and perpetuating cycles of collective suffering. For research on psychosocial trauma, the examples presented here provide support for understanding that there is not always a clearly defined pre-traumatic situation arising from a specific event that allows for precise demarcation. In many cases, as observed in these studies, populations systematically experience situations of violence and rights violations, indicating the sequential nature and historical accumulation of psychosocial harm originating from contexts of political violence (Dobles & Arroyo, 2020; Euzébios Filho, 2023). Moreover, the perpetuation of these conditions can affect subsequent generations, consolidating the transgenerational nature of psychosocial trauma (Gonçalves, 2017, 2021).

The analysis undertaken using the concept of psychosocial trauma also enabled situating the suffering experienced by different populations within a broader social and historical context in the field of relationships between individuals, social groups, and societal structures (Martín-Baró, 1990). This perspective helps move away from an individualizing and pathologizing approach to lived experiences, allowing for an understanding of phenomena and dynamics that take place at the intersubjective level across different sociopolitical contexts of violence. In this sense, recurring indicators of traumatic experience were identified, such as social polarization, distrust in interpersonal relationships, dehumanization, social humiliation, prejudice, weakening of personal autonomy and self-confidence, guilt, powerlessness in organizing daily life, fatalism, disqualification of self-image, constant alertness, and fear, among others.

The experiences reported thus demonstrate that the concept of psychosocial trauma has concrete applicability in the reality of populations affected by political violence and holds practical

relevance. On one hand, it enables the identification of situations experienced by individuals and groups that may lead to psychosocial trauma, considering their impacts at the individual, family, and community levels – although the primary focus remains the community dimension. On the other hand, this concept also guides interventions within affected communities, allowing for the identification of processes of partial or relative recovery from trauma or psychosocial harm (effects), such as the reestablishment of networks of solidarity, the creation of spaces for coexistence and collective processing of suffering, collective organization, the reconstruction of identity and historical memory, and the access to and protection of rights, among other aspects.

In Public Civil Actions and federal-level rulings, such as the Alcântara case, the incorporation of notions of collective moral damage and comprehensive reparation, in line with the understanding of the IACHR, creates space for Psychology's contribution. In the specific case of Alcântara – considered a landmark in international rulings – psychological science provided the foundation for understanding the psychological and social impacts of forced displacement and the lack of territorial recognition. As a result, the Court reaffirmed that Quilombola rights go beyond land ownership, encompassing cultural, social, and psychological dimensions essential to the identity and survival of these communities.

From this perspective, Psychology, through its practice, can support procedural instruments and judicial actions by demonstrating the psychosocial impacts generated by rights violations. The production of technical and expert reports in this field strengthens the defense of collective rights by incorporating a psychopolitical dimension into legal disputes and expanding the possibilities for accountability and reparation for the damages caused.

Furthermore, the experience gained from the cases reported and the dialogue established with the groups and collectives involved made it possible to outline a work approach grounded in participatory, flexible, dynamic, and dialogical models. The practice developed is anchored in the principles of qualitative research, prioritizing the collective construction of knowledge through interdisciplinary, critical, and reflective approaches (Freitas, 2015). This perspective informs all stages of the work – from the formulation of research objectives and instruments to the analysis and construction of information. The methodological combination adopted, with particular emphasis on in-depth narratives, not only allows for a more detailed understanding of the lived experiences of the populations but also enriches the analyses conducted on the studied phenomena, attending to their singular manifestations.

In this sense, the various dimensions of the work become evident – which are not limited to researchers' presence in the field and the subsequent collection of data for production. On the contrary, the work also involves strengthening community capacity and territorial engagement. In the experience of the Bamburral Complex, in Perus, this dimension was realized through mobilization with the Psychosocial Care Network to respond to the mental health needs of community leaders and residents. This experience confirms that our presence in these territories goes beyond research itself, aiming to contribute to the promotion of collective mental health through coordination with local networks, recognizing the psychosocial dimension of rights violations, and strengthening strategies of resilience and resistance.

Another central aspect of this process is the need to consider the specificities of each population and the sociopolitical contexts in which they live – reflected in the ethical-political commitment that underpins every stage of the studies, from initial contact to the communication of results. This care ensures that the work carried out is guided by a committed and responsible approach, guaranteeing an attentive and professional listening process for the affected populations

and contributing to the effective realization of rights and the advancement of psychosocial reparation processes.

The worldview, historical memory, and knowledge constructed by the affected populations are also significant tools in the production of analyses, in the development of methodologies, and in reparation processes. The legitimization of the epistemic-political dimension of the collective and creative construction of strategies and possibilities for confronting experienced violence is, therefore, a fundamental part of reparation processes.

In cases such as the work carried out in Alcântara, which focuses on the impacts of the continuous threat of new removals for the expansion of the ALC, the possibility arises for action through psychosocial reparation measures. In this regard, the jurisprudence of the IACHR establishes the principle of comprehensive reparation for victims who, individually or collectively, were affected and suffered the consequences of a given action, resulting in material or immaterial losses (Mourad et al., 2022).

These measures include the restitution of rights, property, and freedoms; physical, psychological, and/or social rehabilitation; the assurance of victim satisfaction; the adoption of safeguards to prevent the recurrence of violations; the investigation of facts, identification of perpetrators, and, when applicable, their accountability; as well as compensatory indemnities for material damages (such as property losses and consequential damages) and immaterial damages (such as impacts on future prospects, psychosocial and moral spheres, among others) (Mourad et al., 2022).

This article discussed the experience of the Observatory of Psychopolitical Trauma in the production of technical and expert reports related to the effects of political violence and the violation of collective human rights. Accordingly, its contribution lies in the dissemination of these productions, grounded in the notion of psychosocial trauma, as well as in the development of technical-political tools for action, intervention, and prevention. These tools can strengthen the work of psychological science and related fields in identifying the effects of collective violence, the factors contributing to its perpetuation, and in advancing the discussion on reparations for the damages caused by this form of violence.

To conclude, we highlight some challenges for research and psychological practice in contexts of rights violations and systematic violence against collectives, groups, and social movements. These challenges include: 1) advance studies on the notions of psychosocial trauma, psychopolitical trauma, collective psychosocial reparation, and their articulation with collective human rights; 2) develop protocols for psychological practice in psychosocial reparation processes and in the prevention of the production of collective psychosocial harm; 3) expand Psychology's role in contexts of psychic reparation, positioning it as an agent in formulating new strategies for the notion of comprehensive reparation; and 4) produce technical and scientific inputs in partnership with communities and the justice system, contributing to the recognition and improvement of psychosocial reparation measures for collective moral damages, aiming at the realization of collective human rights.

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Contributors

Conceptualization: A. E. MATSUMOTO, A. EUZÉBIOS FILHO, B. S. GONÇALVES, C. N. SANTOS, J. S. SILVA, N. J. O. LEITE JUNIOR. Methodology: A. E. MATSUMOTO, A. EUZÉBIOS FILHO, B. S. GONÇALVES, C. N. SANTOS, J. S. SILVA, N. J. O. LEITE JUNIOR. Writing – original draft: A. E. MATSUMOTO, A. EUZÉBIOS FILHO, B. S. GONÇALVES, C. N. SANTOS, J. S. SILVA, N. J. O. LEITE JUNIOR. Writing – review & editing: A. E. MATSUMOTO, A. EUZÉBIOS FILHO, B. S. GONÇALVES, C. N. SANTOS, J. S. SILVA, N. J. O. LEITE JUNIOR.