



INTERNATIONAL  
RIGHTS OF NATURE  
TRIBUNAL

Quito, March 27, 2024

**PUBLIC STATEMENT:**

**DISMISSAL OF BOAVENTURA DE SOUSA SANTOS AS JUDGE OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS OF NATURE TRIBUNAL**

In April 2023, a complaint was made known about inappropriate sexual conduct at the Boaventura de Sousa Santos academy about exthesists who worked with him at the CES, at the University of Coimbra. After that, other complaints of sexual harassment also accumulated.

In the article “The walls spoke when no one else did” published in the now censored book “Sexual Inappropriate Conduct in Academia” by Routledge Publishing House, the sexual misconduct is exposed against three ex-thetists who denounce the “star professor” for events that occurred between 2011 and 2019, at the CES. They are Lieselotte Viaenne, Catarina Larangeiro and Miye Nadja Tom, authors of the article and the stories that tell how the relationship was requested to be deepened in return for the support of this prestigious academic.

After the publication other women denounced him; the Brazilian representative Bella GonCalves, who stated “I am one of the women who suffered sexual harassment by this man, who was my doctoral research advisor. “After years of silence and a lot of pain, it is time to heal.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.publico.es/mujer/mujeres-acusan-sociologo-portugues-boaventura-sousa-santos-acoso-sexual-decada.html>

Finally, the Mapuche activist and reference from Argentina, Moira Millan, also denounced him <sup>2</sup>for having experienced a situation of harassment and abuse in 2010 <sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile, 250 personalities from the academic world signed in support of the three authors, mentioned above, in a widely circulated writing entitled “We all know.”

Boaventura responded to these complaints that it was personal and institutional defamation and revenge. For this reason, a group of women who worked at the CES with said professor responded that it was not “defamation or revenge; “It was always harassment.” The group reported to Public two cases of sexual harassment. According to them, in a private conversation, Boaventura told an investigator that they could “have a special relationship” and that “when he looks at her legs, he feels desire.” In another case, they claim that the professor mentioned the researcher's body and legs in an email communication. “The researcher harassed by email received 'strong moral harassment and her work was disqualified' for not giving in to the attacks,” the group states. The researchers report that the abusive practices of the teacher, and of people in authority legitimized by him, affected both men and women; “But women were disproportionately affected by work overload, excessive demands, and the frequency with which their work was belittled. The domestic requests were addressed to the investigators, such as asking them to serve him coffee or to provide him with bananas and water while he went to some activity,” they say in another fragment of the letter.

One of Boaventura's closest collaborators, Bruno Sena Martins, was also denounced. Both were suspended from their positions, at least at that time.

We want to highlight that CLACSO suspended all activities scheduled with the sociologist. Numerous academic centers expressed a critical position against Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

Four topics are the basis of our argument:

1) This is not a casual behavior or isolated events, which can occur in an intimate encounter between two people. These are situations of sexual abuse and harassment that have occurred in a work context (the University), which is inserted in a relationship of structural inequality between thesis students and their thesis tutor (with the exception of the case of Millan, although this situation occurred within the framework of an invitation from the Mapuche activist to the CES). Clearly, this framework of asymmetry increases the vulnerability of female students.

2) Added to this is the fear of making the complaint, given the evident power relations between thesis student and tutor, and to whom it was directed, since it is a professor with great international recognition, spokesperson for the epistemology of the south and

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.elsaltodiario.com/violencia-machista/tengo-denunciar-bonaventura-sousa-santos-mujer-presumpmente-izquierdas>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.infobae.com/cultura/2023/04/16/el-sociologo-portugues-boaventura-de-sousa-santos-separado-de-su-cargo-tras-denuncias-de-acoso-sexual/#:~:text=En%20redes%20sociales%2C%20la%20activista,justicia%20y%20para%20el%20mundo%E2%80%9D>

of academic left, with great projection, especially in Latin America. The complainants point out both the indifference and even the complicity of academic institutions, which tend to define well-known figures in the academic world – this extends to other fields of culture, politics, etc. – as “untouchables”, thereby directly or They indirectly endorse the impunity of the situation.

3) The complainants and numerous statements of solidarity that they had highlight the “lack of protocols” and the little attention that academic centers pay to avoid this type of situations that for a long time have been considered “normal”, within the framework of a patriarchal academic model, still dominant today. To this he adds that the absence of protocols favors such abuses of power towards researchers who depend on the approval of these people to build an academic career.

4) Certainly, it is within the framework of the advancement of feminist struggles that this situation, in relation to Boaventura, comes to light, in a context of denaturalization of aberrant behavior from an ethical and academic point of view. Added to this is that the complaints against Sousa Santos do not refer to events that occurred many decades ago, but rather to nearby dates; between 2011 and 2019 (in the case of the first three complainants), from 2014 (in the case of the Brazilian researcher), 2010, in the case of the Mapuche reference.

We know that it is not easy, that it is very painful. This is an intellectual that we all know and recognize, who has been very important for our training, our intellectual and political positions. We are not proposing to throw his categories of thought into the void, but to emphasize the lack of moral and ethical integrity, as a human being and as an academic of Boaventura.

The International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature (IRNT) requested and appointed Boaventura de Sousa Santos as President of the Local Tribunal for Yasuni in April 2014 due to the threat of oil exploitation in this biodiverse National Park, home of indigenous peoples and peoples in isolation. The selection of the Tribunal's judges is based on their ethical and moral track record. Evidently, Boaventura de Sousa Santos' participation at that time in the Tribunal was promoted given his outstanding career as a sociologist, writer, professor, lecturer, philosopher and lawyer.

We would like to highlight that the Tribunal held an Assembly of Judges in order to reach a consensus and adopt a common position regarding the numerous existing complaints against Boaventura de Sousa Santos. The presentation of the case, as a reporting member of the Tribunal, was carried out by Maristella Svampa.

Based on what has been said and on the code of Ethics of the Tribunal and the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature on the issue of harassment and power relations, especially considering that this is an ethical Tribunal, and in the face of these serious complaints the International Rights of Nature Tribunal has decided to dismiss Boaventura de Sousa Santos as judge of the court and therefore of the Assembly of Judges of the IRNT.

The last response, from March 2024 via press release, where he assures that “the reports do not have direct accusations”<sup>4</sup>, reinforces this decision since the sociologist does not take responsibility despite the overwhelming evidence against him.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "NATALIA GREENE". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Natalia Greene  
Secretariat of the International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francesco Martone". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Francesco Martone  
General Coordinator of the Assembly of Judges  
International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature

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<sup>4</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Press Release: Report without direct accusations against Boaventura de Sousa Santos”, March 13, 2024