

Guajajara Murdered in Brazil

Manuel Mendes, a Guajajara Indian, was killed following a land invasion in the state of Maranhão, Brazil. Mendes' assassin, Jaime Jardim, was an invader of the Krikati Indian territory, located in the Brazilian state of Maranhão. According to his daughter, Manuel Mendes had been receiving death threats for some time. Tension had been building in that area since a group of invaders prevented a team of technicians from demarcating the Krikati territory.

The minister of Justice issued a directive ordering the Krikati territory to be demarcated in July of 1992. However, because of pressure from local politicians, land invaders and the family of ex-president José Sarney, the demarcation has been interrupted.

Meanwhile, Krikati land continues to be illegally occupied. Invaders have settled on about twenty farms and in a Krikati village. In December of last year, when technicians were once again sent to demarcate the area, invaders burned the entrance bridges and blocked access to the area.

Information supplied by CIMI-Conselho Indigenista Missionario (Indian Missionary Council)

Colombian Guerrillas Attack Venezuelan Outpost

Tension has been building between Colombia and Venezuela since last February, when Colombian guerrillas crossed the Venezuelan border and attacked a military outpost in the Amazon lowlands. Both Colombian and Venezuelan officials deny the possibility of armed conflict between the two countries, yet Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera ordered thousands of troops to the border area.

As a result of the conflict, anti-Colombian sentiment is high in Venezuela. Venezuelan authorities have deported thousands of undocumented Colombian migrant workers and graffiti slogans such as "Colombian Murderers Go Home" have appeared throughout Caracas.

Honduras: Xicaque Denounce Government

Xicaque leader Julio Soto recently denounced the Honduran government's failure to demarcate their lands and assure their survival. "We're in a bad state. The government will not say the land is ours, and

allows the wild 'ladinos' (non-Indians) to throw us off the land our ancestors left us," he said.

The Xicaque are one of the largest Indigenous groups in Honduras, and although they have been identified by national and international authorities as victims of social oppression, nothing has been done to alleviate their problems. The Xicaque suffer from starvation, illnesses, and the slow but eventual extermination of their people by colonizers of their land.

A Xicaque elder, Timoteo Calix, believes that the genocide of his people will end when the Honduran government sends the International Labor Organization (ILO) ratification of the Indigenous People's Convention 169, which guarantees their protection. Meanwhile, the government has promised to send the ratification of Convention 169 in order to assure all Indigenous communities that it will not abandon its commitment to preserve Xicaque lives and culture.

Information courtesy of InterPress Third World News Agency.

Bill to Grant Ngobe-Bugle Autonomy in Panama

Due to strong opposition by the Ngobe-Bugle community of Panama to the mining of their lands, the government has drawn up a bill that will grant the community autonomy over its territory. The Ngobe-Bugle people claim ownership of over 11,000 square kilometers of land in the western part of Panama.

Marcelino Montezuma, a Ngobe-Bugle leader, explained that his community rejected the mining of their territory out of concern for environmental degradation. The Ngobe-Bugle people felt that without autonomy over their land, they would be powerless to regulate the mining process. "First of all, we want independence, then we will see if mining will suit us," he said.

While discarding the use of violence to gain autonomy, Montezuma insisted that the Indigenous people of Panama "are losing patience." He also said that they demand to be treated with dignity and will not allow the Panamanian government to take away their ancestral lands.

Information courtesy of InterPress Third World News Agency.