

Brazil: Indigenous Commission Fights for Demarcation

A commission of twenty-three Xucuru Kariri, Wassu Cocal, Geripankó, Kariri-Xokó, and Karapotó Indians from Alagoás, along with Xokó Indians from Sergipe, went to Brasilia to denounce acts of violence against Indians and demand measures for the demarcation of their lands. The commission was heard by audiences at FUNAI, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Chamber of Deputies. Citing one of the most serious incidents, the Karapotó warned that at least eight mysterious fires had destroyed crops, fences and grazing land in their 1,810-hectare territory, which has been the object of litigation for two years.

Canadian Mining Interests in Nicaragua Threaten Sumu

The Nicaraguan Ministry of Economics recently awarded a mining permit to the Nycon Resource Company of Canada to search for gold and other minerals in the Bosawas Reserve. Nelson Lopez of Nicaragua's Environment and Natural Resources Agency (MARENA) has said that the mining operation threatens the health of the Sumu and constitutes "a violation of the 1991 law" that established the reserve. Yet the Bosawas Reserve, on the border of Honduras in northwest Nicaragua, continues to be the site of mining, logging, and subsistence farming operations that endanger Indigenous populations and the environment. According to MARENA, there are now 700 non-Indigenous families living on the borders of the reserve who have cleared thousands of acres of forest for crops and cattle-grazing. Loggers have begun to haul tropical hardwood from the area to Managua, and flights

over the reserve reveal huge clear-cut areas on the western and southern edges. Sumu leaders have demanded the cancellation of the mining permit.

Information courtesy of Nicaragua Center for Community Action.

Indigenous Assembly Grapples with Suicides

Suicides among the Guarani Kaiowa, which have been on the rise for the past ten years, were the main subject discussed this past May at an Assembly of the Aty Guassu Organization in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. The Assembly brought together shamans, Indian leaders and chiefs from 22 villages to try to learn why 22 Indians have committed suicide this year.

The suicide rate among the Guarani Koaiowa is unusually high. The World Health Organization considers that an estimate of over one case in 10,000 per year is abnormal. According to FUNAI, 161 suicides, most of which were committed by young Indians, were registered among the Guarani Kaiowa from 1985 through May of this year.

Extreme poverty, the gradual loss of traditional religious practices, and, above all, the lack of land are factors directly linked to the suicides. Araldo Veron, who also once attempted suicide, spoke on these factors at the Assembly.

The villages of Dourados, with 8,900 Indians squeezed in 3,530 hectares of land, and Caarapor, with 2,346 Indians, have been the most affected.

Information courtesy of CIMI-Conselho Indigenista Missionário.

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