

Ñamandú:

A Guaraní Community Pays a Heavy Price for a National Park in Misiones, Argentina

On the 10th of October, 1995, soon after mid-day, a group of uniformed, armed men from the Body of Park Wardens of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Government of Misiones entered the Mby'á Guaraní community of Ñamandú-Arroyo Azul and destroyed its dwellings and nearby fields. The motive for the attack remains unknown, but it is widely believed that it was due to the political interests associated with the creation of the Provincial Park of Cuñá Pirú, and the broader governmental plans to bring tourism to the area.

The area of Ñamandú is located in the eastern end of the valley of Cuñá Pirú, in the center of the province of Misiones of northeastern Argentina. It is covered with virgin rainforest and is one of the last undeveloped areas of the Paraná-Misiones Forest. It is also sacred to the eleven Mby'á Guaraní communities that live there. The three communities of Ñamandú (Arroyo Azul, Ñamandú and Tamandú-í) are considered the guardians of the sacred area.

Only four women, the children, and the elderly were present in the village when the uniformed men arrived saying that, in the name of the government, they had to withdraw from the provincial park immediately. The women responded in Guaraní Mby'á that they would wait until the men returned. When the women refused to accompany them out of the park, the officials broke into the dwellings, threw out all of the belongings, and destroyed all of the dwellings in the community, including the "House of Prayer" (*Opy*). Then they destroyed the community's

fields—all of which were ready for harvest. Soon the men returned from the forest with food and found their community completely destroyed. They quickly sought refuge in nearby villages.

On the 12th of October, with the help of other chiefs, the members of Ñamandú-Arroyo Azul wrote a letter to Lorenzo Ramos, leader of the Counsel of Caciques (chiefs) of the Guaraní People. They stated that, "We are 13 aboriginal families that, for a long time, have lived on this forest. Eight of our families have been evicted; forty people, old and young... Today we are thrown out into the streets and we sleep in the forest and don't have anything to eat. The children are getting sick and us poor mothers and fathers, we don't know what to do with them because we

"This in an incident that does not deserve all the expensive 'hoopla' that has been made over it," -Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources

abandoned our houses and the fields of manioc and wheat. We are suffering... We do not know what will happen... We do not know why we were evicted."

Although the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources did not accept the responsibility for the events of Ñamandú and stated, "This in an incident that does not deserve all the expensive 'hoopla' that has been made over it," in November a court case ensued during which an "apology" was issued. The Counsel of Caciques of the Guaraní People continue to pressure the local and national governments and

are demanding that a Community Indigenous Territory in the name of the Guaraní be created out of the Provincial Park, Ku Pirú, that would be part of the Natural Cultural Reserve. ♡

Please show your support for the Guaraní people by writing letters demanding:

- that the government repair the damages they have incurred and that the wardens be made legally responsible in a court of law;

- support of the request of the Guaraní communities of Ku Pirú that their land be demarcated in a Community Indigenous Territory of 12,000 hectares;

- the re-establishment of Law 2435 that recognizes the Guaraní People, and their political, social, economic, and cultural systems, and grants them relative autonomy;

Sr. Gobernador de la Provincia de Misiones, Don Federico Ramón Puerta, Casa del Gobierno, 3300 Posadas, Argentina; Tel: 54-752-34483

Sr. Presidente de la Nación, Dr. Carlos S. Menem, Casa de Gobierno, Balcarce 50, 1000 Buenos Aires; Argentina; Fax: 54-1-331-6376; Tel: 54-1-343-3051

Sr. Presidente de la Cámara de Diputados de Misiones, Don Hector Caballero, Palacio Legislativo, Ivanoswky 1950, 3300 Posadas, Argentina; Fax: 54-752-39193

For more information contact the Centro Mocovi "Ialek Lav'a," Casilla de Correo 36, 2728 Melincué (Prov. de Santa Fe), Argentina; Tel: (54) 0465-99015; Fax: (54) 0465-99197.