

## BRAZIL

# Rondônia: Indian People Organize For Survival

SAIIC has received reports of an apparent massacre of Nambiquara people in Brazil's frontier state of Rondônia. The conflict took place in November at the headwaters of the Rio Corumbiara, west of the city of Vilhena.

Investigators have found Indian houses crushed and gardens plowed under by bulldozers. Antônio José Junqueira Vilela, a landowner, has reportedly ordered armed guards to keep all outsiders out of the area.

The Nambiquara have suffered greatly from the expansion of cattle ranching, lumbering, and colonization projects in Rondônia. In the 1970's, Nambiquara were found wandering aimlessly along the newly-built BR-364 road after they had been expelled from their villages. They were hungry, sick, and had lost the will to live.

In 1979, the flow of migrants and speculators into Rondônia became a flood with the paving of the highway, largely funded by the World Bank's Polonoroeste program. Periodic World Bank pressure on the Brazilian government to demarcate and protect Indian areas has been inadequate, and every Indian group in Rondônia confronts serious threats to their traditional lands. Last year alone, more than 200,000 settlers migrated to Rondônia.

In September, 1985, the Union of Indian Nations (UNI) with the help of the Indian Missionary Council (CIMI) held the First Encounter of Indian People of Rondônia at Cacoal. Although many of the groups represented, including Suruí, Cinta Larga, Pácaa Nova, Kaiabi, Gavião, Pareci, Nambiquara, and Mequens, had only a few years of contact with non-Indian society, a consensus emerged that a unified effort is crucial in the fight for self-determination, land, and survival.

*Nambiquara youth (right).*



Photo: Arquivo FUNAI