



Constitutional Revision Threatens Indigenous Rights

Orlando Melgueiro da Silva Baré, General Coordinator of the Council of Articulation of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Brazil, offers these observations on how Indigenous rights may be challenged under the 1993 Constitutional revision in Brazil:

"Brazil is preparing to revise its constitution. Within this, questions affecting Indian people are involved, principally when one speaks of mineral wealth and natural resources found in Indian areas. All this is being looked at with big eyes by large economic groups, which worries us.

"The new Indian statute will consider the proposals presented by Indigenous people in Brasilia at the end of April of this year. Among the questions we are considering are the demarcation and self-demarcation of our land, and the exploitation of mineral and hydroelectric resources.

"The military is pressing conservative legislators, and even some on the left, so that

they favor the revision of already demarcated Indian lands. This despite the fact that demarcating lands in the border regions is no risk to national security, and not even the Indians want to construct independent states. On the contrary, Indigenous peoples also obey the constitution, and above all we want the Brazilian government to obey the constitution.

"We are looking for alternatives - among them, to form a stronger alliance between Indigenous organizations themselves, with popular movements, and with the legislators who are for the Indigenous cause. We look to merge our forces so that Indigenous proposals be considered, and so that the rights which were guaranteed in the 1988 constitution not be overturned."

Source: Informe Jurídico - Address: Comissão Pró Índio de São Paulo, Rua Ministro Godoy 1484, Salas 56 e 57, CEP 05015 Perdizes, São Paulo SP, Brazil.

Suicides Increase Among Guarani Kaiova

An alarming rate of suicides has been registered among the Guarani-Kaiova of Brazil's Mato Grosso do Sul, caused by despair at their estrangement from traditional lands and way of life.

According to the Indigenist Missionary Council (CIMI) and the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), 20 Guarani-Kaiova hanged themselves in 1992, bringing the suicides to a seven-year total of 100. Of the 20

who died last year, 12 were under 20 years of age (See CIMI statistics page 18).

With most of their traditional territories still not demarcated, and their lands invaded by ranchers, the Guarani are forced to seek work on sugarcane plantations and at alcohol plants. There, they are paid very little, and are not accorded benefits proscribed for workers under law.

Source: Indigenist Missionary Council (CIMI)

Contact CIMI for more information:

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