

## Brazil's Tupinikim and Guarani Indians Take Repossession in Their Own Hands

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Around 200 indigenous people from seven settlements in Espírito Santo, in southeastern Brazil, have started to reoccupy the areas that they themselves have demarcated over the last few weeks.

The group is cutting down the eucalyptus trees planted in the 11,009-hectare area of the indigenous lands that are currently in the hands of the company Aracruz Celulose.

These 11,009 hectares have already been identified by FUNAI and recognized as indigenous lands by the ex-Minister of Justice Íris Rezende, but were not included in the demarcation orders due to an unconstitutional agreement signed by the indigenous people after the leaders had suffered coercion.

The court order in favor of Aracruz Celulose, which decreed the withdrawal of the indigenous people from their territory, was overturned on appeal by the Federal Court, based on the argument that Funai and the Public Prosecutor's Office should have been heard before the Federal Court came to its decision.

On June 2, a march in favor of the demarcation of the Tupinikim and Guarani lands took place in Vitória, the capital of Espírito Santo.

Indigenous people, landless workers, small farmers and the population of Espírito Santo marched to the center of the city.

The event coincided with the opening of the 4th National Meeting of the Green Desert Alert Network, a network that brings together communities affected by the eucalyptus and pine monocultures in Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and Rio Grande do Sul.

By mid June, the current Minister of Justice Márcio Thomaz Bastos will have to come to a decision about a recommendation made by the Public Prosecutor's Office involving the issue of a new demarcation order, which includes the 11,009 hectares that were not demarcated in 1998.

The President of FUNAI, Mércio Pereira Gomes, who met with the indigenous leaders last week, has promised to talk to the Minister of Justice, to ask him to issue a new order recognizing the rights of the Tupinikim and Guarani to the area.

Reoccupation of these lands is taking place nine days after the demarcation process, an activity that involved 500 indigenous people.

Today, the work of cutting down the eucalyptus trees continues, and two huts have been built to house the families that will remain there.

In place of the felled eucalyptus trees, food and native plants will be planted.

Cimi - Indianist Missionary Council - [www.cimi.org.br](http://www.cimi.org.br)