

Child Dies and Hundreds of Brazilian Indians Are Abandoned in Dire Condition

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In the week following the eviction of Guarani-Kaiowá families from the Nhande Ru Marangatu land in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, earlier this month, a one-year-and-four-month-old girl died from diarrhea, vomiting and dehydration.

The health of the children is more and more affected by the conditions under which the indigenous people are living, in plastic tents and exposed to the heat and the rain, with no access to water and not enough food.

The only food available to the indigenous people are the food baskets distributed by the Brazilian National Foundation for Indigenous People (Funai).

Worried with the security of the indigenous people, the Coordination of Social Movements (CMS) of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul warned about the possibility of new conflicts in the area where they are camped and said that it will request police protection for the Guarani people.

"One of the most pressing emergency issues is ensuring their security. We will notify the state government, the Public Safety Secretariat and Brazil's Federal Police about the risks for indigenous people in the region.

"A few days ago, farmers tried to pass 1,200 cattle through an area where the indigenous people were camped. And we will also launch a campaign asking for aid for these people," said Marcelo Brito dos Santos, from the Brazilian Human Rights Defense Center.

In a manifesto the CMS reported threats from farm employees brandishing guns in the front of the camp and informed that indigenous children and adults are in high danger of being run over by trucks in the highway and that they "lack the minimum framework to ensure their survival, as they have no water, food or clothes, which were completely destroyed in a criminal action carried out by the owners of farms located near their camp, who burned all their belongings after they were evicted from their land and had no time to get them from their shacks."

Judicial measures

Two representatives of the Guarani-Kaiowá people from the Nhande Ru Marangatu asked a justice of the Supreme Court, Ellen Gracie, to speed up the judgment of a writ of mandamus questioning the official confirmation of the bounds of the Nhande Ru Marangatu land, located in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul.

The next meeting of the Supreme Court will only be held in February 2006. Until then, the indigenous people will be forced to live out of their lands, in tents set up next to a highway.

"We decided to write to you to ask you to help us, since you have the power to make this important decision on our case. We were living in a land which had been declared an indigenous land and had been demarcated and had its bounds officially confirmed and we were expelled from our land.

"For this reason, we, the Guarani Kaiowá people, who are now living on the margin of a highway, are asking the Supreme Court to judge the case of our land as quickly as possible, so that we might live a dignified and fairer life, as every human being deserves," the indigenous people said.

And they added: "Today we are camped next to a highway, but we believe in the competence of the authorities of the Supreme Court and in the Lula administration. We wish that in February 2006 we will be able to go back to and occupy our whole land and stay in it. And only you can make sure that this will happen. We have faith and hope that we will be able to go back to this land, which by right and under the law of the Constitution is already ours."

Solidarity

In their trip to Brasília, Guarani leaders also relied on the solidarity of the Association of Small Farmers of Campestre, which is made up of families who since 1962 have been living in the Campestre village, which was built inside the Nhande Ru Marangatu indigenous land.

The small farmers are willing to leave the land, but they are asking the authorities to speed up the process of indemnifying them for improvements made therein and requesting an "emergency support plan" to help them survive until they can restructure their production.

"We, the families that were settled in this place, are aware that there are sufficient lands in Brazil to solve the problem by recognizing the rights of the indigenous people to the land and our right to live and produce in a piece of land in this region. We are trying to give our contribution to solving these problems that causes so much suffering," they said in a letter.

Cimi - Indianist Missionary Council - www.cimi.org.br