
Tragedy: 4 Deaths and 4 Months Later Brazilian Indians Still Living by the Highway

Contributed by Juliana Andrade
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The president of Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), Mércio Pereira Gomes, classified the situation of the Guarani-Kaiowá Indians who are living in an encampment alongside the BR-384 highway, between the municipalities of Antônio João and Bela Vista, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, as a Brazilian tragedy.

The Guarani-Kaiowá - 900 of them - were evicted, December 15, 2005, by court order from the Nande Ru Maragatu lands, after the then president of the Federal Supreme Court (STF), minister Nelson Jobim, granted an injunction restoring the lands to their former owners. This decision suspends the homologation of the area, according to Gomes.

The STF's press office informed that a date has not yet been set for the full court to judge the merits of the case. Minister César Peluso is in charge of preparing the report. Gomes appealed to the STF to settle this case as soon as possible.

"The problem is that sometimes the delays are excessive, so we really want the minister who is in charge of this cause, this case, to reach a decision and place it in judgment, as rapporteur, so that it can be resolved."

Gomes recalled that the homologation process for this Indian territory, which covers 9.3 thousand hectares, lasted around six years. He said that removing the Indians from the region entailed a series of problems, such as the death of four children.

"The Indians that were removed are encamped alongside the highway and are suffering from many problems, despite the fact that the FUNAI and the FUNASA (National Health Foundation) are present at the locale. Four children have already died as a result of malnutrition, the accommodations in which they are living. And it is a very bad thing to observe."

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