

Brazil Vows Compensation to 250 Families Living in Indian Territory

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Monday, 17 April 2006

Brazil's National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra) estimates that, in all, around 250 non-Indian families will receive compensation for leaving the Raposa Serra do Sol Indian reservation in Roraima.

According to the General Department of External Matters of the National Indian Foundation (Funai), around 240 families remain in the area, and 52 have been removed since the regularization process began. The latter families, the department informs, have already been paid US\$ 1,114,370.01 (2,387,649 reais).

Of the 240 families that are resisting removal, 25 have not sought the compensation funds to which they are entitled. According to the Funai, US\$ 352,141.74 (754,498.90 reais) are available for these families.

The Incra press office informs that the 250 families scheduled to be removed - the Funai is still awaiting the completion of the technical survey of the region to confirm this figure - include people who fit the profile of agrarian reform settlers, who, among other criteria, cannot have an income, should depend exclusively upon agricultural activities for their livelihood, and cannot be either public servants or entrepreneurs.

According to the press office, these families will be resettled by the Incra on 100 hectare plots and will receive compensation from the Funai.

Moreover, they will be entitled to US\$ 2,334 (5,000 reais) to build their homes and US\$ 1,120 (2,400 reais) to buy the equipment and material they need to start production.

According to Raimundo Lima, Incra director of programs, they will also receive "a letter of recommendation" signed by the superintendent of the Incra to help them obtain bank loans.

The small farmers who don't fit the profile of agrarian reform settlers will receive compensation from the Funai and plots of up to 500 hectares. The entrepreneurs, including the rice planters, will also be eligible for compensation.

According to Lima, Incra and Funai employees faced resistance from the rice planters when they were surveying the non-Indians who occupy the reservation and the improvements made by the squatters.

"Last year we tried to do the surveys and the registries with teams from the Incra and the Funai. They were barred, and the technical personnel were threatened and returned to the cities. So we asked for a Federal Police escort, first, to make sure the job was done and, second, to ensure the physical integrity of our employees."

Despite the resistance by the rice planters, the Incra director said that the goal is to disoccupy the area in a peaceful manner. "We are striving to accomplish a peaceful removal, with a lot of dialogue and respecting the rights of the families. That is why we are making areas available."

The Raposa Serra do Sol reservation, which is located in the eastern part of Roraima, covers more than 1.7 million hectares and is home to 15 thousand Indians of the Macuxi, Taurepang, Wapixana, and Ingarikó ethnic groups.

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