

## Brazilian Indians Vow Bloodbath If Evicted from Their Land

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As Brazil celebrates Indian Day on Wednesday, April 19, Guarani Indians facing eviction from their land have warned of a bloodbath. The Indians are to be forced to return to the roadside where they lived in miserable conditions before 2004.

A federal judge ruled last week that the Guarani of Passo Piraju must be evicted from their land within 30 days. The Indians were first evicted in the 1950s, and eventually obtained a court order in 2004 allowing them to return to part of Passo Piraju.

Ranchers contested the order, and a judge ruled last week that Passo Piraju was not traditional Guarani land and that the Indians had invaded it.

The ruling came the week after some of the Guarani, thinking they were under attack, killed two policemen who had entered the community in civilian clothes and an unmarked car.

Many Guarani leaders have been killed by hired assassins, and the Passo Piraju community had been threatened by the son of a local rancher.

"If we need to we'll fight to the death so that our community can stay on the land. If the police throw us out, a lot of blood is going to flow on this land," said Abaeté de Assis from Passo Piraju last week.

Between 1940 and 1960 thousands of Guarani were evicted from their land and put into large reservations. Overcrowding has led many young people to commit suicide, and dozens of children have died from malnutrition in the last two years.

Indians from all over Brazil are expected to gather in Brasilia, the Brazilian capital, this week to protest at President Lula's government's record on indigenous peoples. Indian leaders have slammed the government's policy as "retrograde."

Stephen Corry, director of Survival International told reporters, "President Lula's government has proved it can do the right thing by the Indians when it wants to. A year ago, Lula finally recognized Raposa Serra do Sol, where the Indians had faced centuries of violence and opposition. But in the case of the Guarani there seems to be a chronic lack of will to deal with the question of land - and this is costing hundreds of lives."

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