

Brazilian Indians Hold Three Hostages to Have Their Truck Fixed

Contributed by Newsroom
Friday, 28 April 2006

The 13 chiefs of Brazil's Apinajé people held hostage the regional manager of the Brazilian Federal Indian Service Funai, João Batista dos Santos, the head of a Funai station, Raimundo Garcia, and an agricultural expert, Airtton, known as Mineirinho on Wednesday, April 26.

The action, according to the indians, was taken to press Funai to fulfill commitments already made, such as those of providing a truck for transporting indigenous people, inspecting indigenous lands to avoid their devastation, and implementing projects for ensuring the livelihood of the indians,

"We've been having meetings for a long time in the São José village. The manager came and promised that he would make a car available to us to transport our people. We have a truck without brakes and two tractors that are not working.

"The manager said that he had the funds to fix the cars since 2004, but he never fixed them. Many months went by without him coming here and now he's back again. Now, they will have to negotiate these things with us," justified one of the leaders of the Apinajé people, who live in the mid-west region of Brazil, in the state of Tocantins.

According to the indigenous leader, the truck is used for transporting indigenous people - usually people going to the city to sell products and retired individuals who must go there to receive their pensions - to Tocantinópolis, a city located at about 20 km from their village.

The vehicles which transport the indigenous people in many places are in terrible conditions and, as a result, six of them died in Rondônia in January 2006 in an accident.

The indigenous people were informed that funds were available to fix the tractor of the community, but they were never fixed.

"Funai promised to give us areas to grow our crops and wire fences but they always say later that they have no funds," one of the leaders said, who also mentioned that their land had been invaded by hunters, fishermen and woodcutters and that Funai had not been inspecting it to prevent such occurrences.

"If the extraction of timber is to stop in our land it must be permanently inspected and we must have a car," he said.

According to information provided by the Apinajé, the regional manager of Funai in Araguaína got in touch with the indigenous leaders by phone, but they requested the presence of the director of the agency in the Apinajé land to carry out negotiations.

Cimi - www.cimi.com.br