

## Brazilian Bishop Again Opposes Lula Over River Transposition

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Brazilian Bishop Luiz Flávio Cappio sent a new letter to the Planalto Place in Brazil's capital Brasília (where the office of the President of the Republic is located) requesting Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to resume the dialogue with civil society on the project to transpose the São Francisco river.

"The government continues to assume the authoritarian position of imposing a project that has not been discussed with society and with people living on the banks of the São Francisco river.

"A dialogue was started, we had meetings in Brasília already. But we need to expand this dialogue and society at large needs to take part in the discussions. This discussion should not be restricted to the elite," said the bishop, who in September 2005 made a hunger strike for 10 days to challenge the transposition project.

The legality of the environmental license issued for the project to be implemented is also being questioned by social organizations and by the Federal Prosecutor's Office. They say that no reliable survey of environmental and social impacts caused by the transposition project has been carried out.

On February 12, the federal attorney general, Antonio Fernando Souza, filed an appeal with the Supreme Court requesting the suspension of the environmental license issued for the transposition project and the revocation of a prior license issued by the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama) for the same purpose.

In his appeal, the general attorney insists that the requirement that the National Congress and indigenous populations affected by the project should be consulted about the utilization of natural resources in indigenous lands must be complied with.

The appeal will be analyzed by the 11 justices of the Supreme Court. A final judicial decision on the project will only be issued after this analysis is carried out.

In December of last year, a decision of justice Sepúlveda Pertence, of the Supreme Court, annulled preliminary orders which prevented the beginning of the transposition project and, in January 2007, the Federal Government announced that the Engineering Battalion of the Army - which can be designated to carry out engineering works without a tender process - would begin to implement the project.

The minister for National Integration, Pedro Brito, said that 90 million reais (US\$ 42 million) had been transferred to the

Ministry of Defense for the engineering works to begin.