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## Tired of Waiting for Government Action Brazilian Indians Take Over Land

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Tupinikim and Guarani Brazilian Indians who live in the southeastern state of Espírito Santo started to repossess on July 24 part of the territory that they say belong to them. Around 11,000 hectares of the territory identified as indigenous land by the National Foundation for Indigenous People (Funai) had been invaded by plantations from the multinational company Aracruz Celulose.

The Indians are now waiting for demarcation of the land, which depends on a decision from the Minister of Justice, Tarso Genro.

Since the beginning of July, the National Foundation for Indigenous People's report recommending demarcation of the land has once again been at the Justice minister's desk. Genro must now issue a government order declaring the area indigenous so that the physical boundary markers can be put in place.

Groups in defense of Indians say they expect this Minister of Justice to not act like his predecessor. The former Minister Márcio Thomaz Bastos' last act concerning this case was in March 2007, when he sent the process back to Funai, asking the Foundation to try and reconcile "the interests of the parties."

Whilst they are waiting for Genro's decision, the Tupinikim and the Guarani have once again occupied their lands. Around 250 people are rebuilding the Olho D'água settlement, which was destroyed in 2006, after a major police operation expelled the indigenous people.

"We have waited a long time for demarcation and have still not even been granted an audience with this Minister", said chief Toninho Tupinikim.

When the houses have been built, some Guarani families will move into the area. Then, they will rebuild the Macacos and Areal settlements. The indigenous people are also expelling the invaders that are stealing eucalyptus from the land. For this reason, they have closed some of the highways in the region.

With the suspension of the tree felling and expulsion of non-indigenous people, the indigenous people intend to preserve the eucalyptus plantations and use them as payment for the compensation due to Aracruz Celulose for any improvements made in the 11,000 hectares. This is explained in the document issued by the Tupinikim and Guarani Chiefs and Leaders Committee.

As of now, the indigenous people have not yet received a court order to leave the area, but a climate of tension is ever-

present. "If the Minister comes to a decision on the process soon, the conflicts in the region will diminish," chief Toninho believes.

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