

# Life in territories under pressure:

Uru-eu-wau-wau,  
Paiter Suruí and  
Arara peoples





# Presentation

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The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 is a hallmark of Brazilian constitutionalism, a plea for redemocratization and broader social rights, with an express determination that the lands of indigenous peoples and quilombolas must be recognized.

Despite that, the situation of indigenous peoples has never been considered a priority in the country's public policy agenda. Sadly, we face a never-ending process of rights violations, territorial invasions, and perpetuation of structural racism derived from colonization.

In the very recent past, particularly throughout the last decade, the increase in agricultural, woodcutting and livestock expansions, associated with attempts to soften environmental laws and weaken regulatory efforts, along with illegal prospecting activity, have all led to a growing number of conflicts in the Amazon territory, resulting in the murders of indigenous people and forest defenders. In the current scenario, relations between the private sector and the Brazilian State are excessively close, leading to conflicts of interest and asymmetries of power between affected communities and the combination of private sector and State influence. Since colonial times, this has endangered the very survival of indigenous peoples in the country.

According to data obtained and organized by the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT),<sup>1</sup> together with organizations from Brazil's Legal Amazon region, and international entities, between January 2020 and July 2022, 202 people (most of them peasant men) were murdered for defending their territories. Of this total, 62 murders (30%) took place in Brazil. Data from that same report indicates that, between the years of 1985 and 2021, 1,536 murders were reported in rural conflicts, re-

<sup>1</sup> "90% dos assassinatos de defensores das florestas não são julgados, aponta CPT", InfoAmazonia. Available at: <https://infoamazonia.org/2022/11/16/90-dos-assassinatos-de-defensores-das-floresta-nao-sao-julgados-aponta-cpt/>. Accessed on: 19/05/2023.

sulting in 2,028 dead. However, only 147 of these crimes were tried in court. This means that 90% of the murder cases in this period were not processed in court whatsoever, demonstrating that a lack of effective investigations is the norm, which sadly leads to near-total impunity.

Conectas Direitos Humanos has worked intensely at the Federal Supreme Court (STF) level through amicus curiae, in the Inter-American Human Rights Protection System and in the United Nations (UN), in addition to carrying out actions that affect the Brazilian Congress. We have supported indigenous leaders and indigenists in complaints in these spaces, helping to strengthen their litigation strategies. Through this process, we have built partnerships with countless indigenous and indigenist organizations, which have been crucial sources of learning to improve our work.

This report is the result of a partnership between Conectas Direitos Humanos, Associação Etnoambiental Kanindé, Instituto Maíra, Jupaú – Associação do Povo Indígena Uru-eu-wau-wau and KOWIT – Associação Indígena do Povo Arara da Cachoeira Seca. This document includes the views and voices of leaders who have worked on the front lines for the protection of indigenous rights and of recently-contacted peoples. Though these communities have suffered in the recent past from neglectful governments, they continue designing strategies for community-level strengthening and resistance.

Our main goal is to highlight the protagonism of Uru-Eu-Waw-Wau, Paiter Suruí and Arara (of the Cachoeira Seca IL) leaders. Their actions are not only noteworthy due to the pains, threats, and human rights violations to which they are routinely subjected, but also because of the ancestral technologies that these indigenous leaders employ. We hope that this report may provide a depiction of the specific characteristics of these indigenous peoples, as well as a portrait of recent developments of the struggle of indigenous people in Brazil.

We hope you appreciate this document!



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July 2023

# Contents



<b><u>Territorial situation of the Uru-eu-wau-wau and Paiter Suruí peoples: Uru-eu-wau-wau and Sete de Setembro indigenous lands</u></b>	<b>7</b>
Letter in defense of the Uru-eu-wau-wau and Sete de Setembro Indigenous Land	8
Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land (UEWWIL)	9
Sete de Setembro Indigenous Land (SSIL)	16
<b><u>Territorial situation of the Arara people: Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land</u></b>	<b>25</b>
Letter from the Arara people to the world	26
Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land	28
<b><u>Final considerations</u></b>	<b>48</b>

# Territorial situation of the Uru-eu- wau-wau and Paiter Suruí peoples: Uru- eu-wau-wau and Sete de Setembro indigenous lands

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## **Letter in defense of the Uru-eu-wau-wau and Sete de Setembro Indigenous Lands**

The pressure and threats against the Uru-eu-wau-wau and Sete de Setembro Indigenous Lands (IL) and the activists who protect them have increased in recent years. The omission and collusion of the Bolsonaro administration have put the forest and its people at risk. The Brazilian State must urgently establish a commitment to defend these territories and populations, and society, institutions and foundations must support the projects proposed by indigenous people, their organizations and allies, in the quest for economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability.

Projects that protect the lives of forest and human rights defenders must be developed and supported, projects that must include the defense of not just one person but their families as well, for these attacks often involve the entire family. These projects must be extended in the long term so that these defenders don't lose their lives as soon as people consider the threats to be under control and support is subsequently removed.

Indigenous and non-indigenous organizations working for the defense of human rights and nature must be developed and strengthened, and there must be legal, technical, and financial support to avoid new deaths.

The strengthening and the changes made to the National Indigenous Peoples' Foundation (FUNAI), the Brazilian Institute for the Environment (IBAMA), the Chico Mendes Biodiversity Conservation Institute (ICMBio) and the Federal Police to work on protecting indigenous peoples and their territories are crucial to changing the current system of land grabbing and natural resource theft in indigenous lands, so that the Amazon and its peoples may live in peace, without the fear of being murdered for defending their rights and the forest.


*Txai Surui, Coordinator of the Rondônia Indigenous Youth Movement and the Ethno-Environmental Defense Association*

*Ivaneide Bandeira Cardozo, indigenist and activist for human rights and the environment*

*Bitaté Uru-eu-wau-wau, chairman of the Uru-eu-wau-wa Indigenous People's Association*

*Almir Narayamoga Surui, Labiway Esaga of the Paiter Surui people*





The state of Rondônia has 22 regulated Indigenous Lands that suffer multiple variations of anthropic pressure – i.e. man-made actions. Five of these lands are under constant attack from the logging industry, prospectors, land-grabbers, hunters, fishermen, and livestock and soy farmers seeking land to lease out.

This report will focus its discussion on two ILs, the Uru-eu-wau-wau and the Sete de Setembro Indigenous Lands, including a brief report about the situation of isolated indigenous peoples in Rondônia.

### **Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land (UEWWIL)**

The Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land (UEWWIL) is among the thirty indigenous lands most deeply affected by deforestation in 2022 (INPE).<sup>2</sup> The presence of land-grabbers within and around it, in addition to the presence of prospectors and loggers, without effective control by FUNAI, has led to the devastation of the northern and southern parts of the IL.

It is important to highlight the presence of prospectors in the UEWWIL. In 2021, members of the Jupaú people apprehended invading prospectors entering the IL. Furthermore, there is no investigation or systematic process focused on controlling the entry of prospectors in the southern section of the IL, a region where the prospector Rieli Franciscato was killed by isolated indigenous people in September 2020. According to an analysis by the National Human Rights Council,<sup>3</sup> there is evidence that links Franciscato's death to the prospector invasion in the area.

#### *Location*

The Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land (UEWWIL) extends over approximately 18,671.178 km<sup>2</sup> and is located in an area of the State of Rondônia that encompasses 12 municipalities: Alvorada d'Oeste, Cacaulândia, Campo Novo de Rondônia, Costa Marques, Governador Jorge Teixeira, Guajará Mirim, Jaru, Mirante da Serra, Monte Negro, Nova Mamoré, São Miguel do Guaporé and Seringueiras (Figure 1 – Uru-eu-wau-wau IL map).

<sup>2</sup> TerraBrasilis. PRODES (Desmatamento). Available at: [http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal\\_amazon/increments](http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal_amazon/increments). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>3</sup> Recomendação No. 04, de 12 de Março de 2021, Conselho Nacional dos Direitos Humanos. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/participamaisbrasil/recomendacao-n-04-de-12-de-marco-de-2021>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

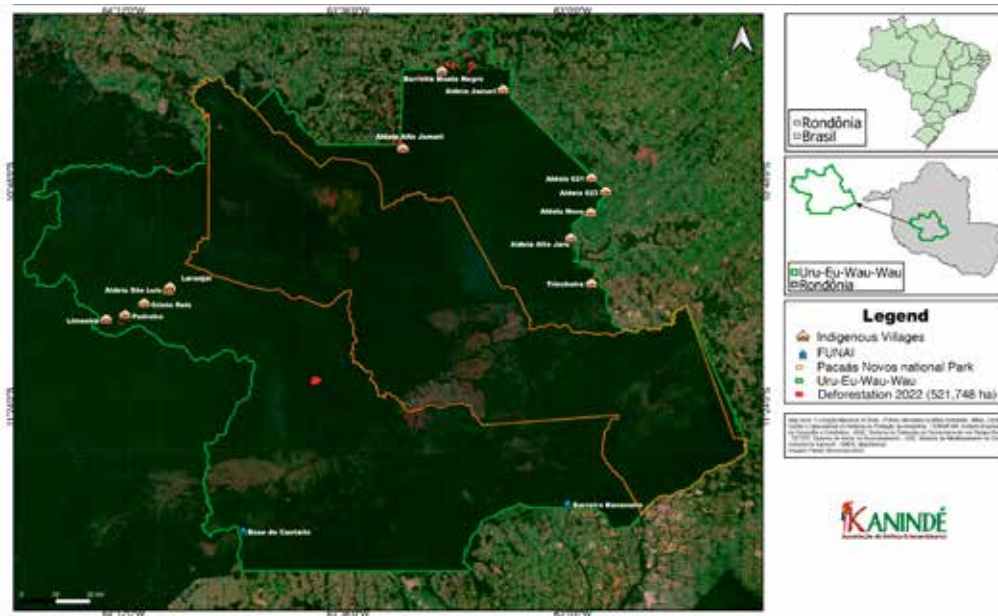


Figure 1: Map of the Uru-eu-wau-wau indigenous land-RO.

### *Population and villages*

The population of the UEWWIL amounts to approximately 362 indigenous people: 123 Jupaú, 126 Amondawa, 88 Oro Towati (Oro Win), and 25 Cabixi distributed among 10 villages, those being seven Jupaú, one Amondawa, one Cabixi, and one Oro Towati (Oro Win) inside the Indigenous Land (Figure 1). It is important to note that the census must be updated to reflect newer population data.

There are four groups of isolated indigenous peoples whose occupation area is currently being surveyed. Of these groups, three are confirmed and one is still unconfirmed, and their numbers are unknown. Since these groups are not in contact with Western society, there is no way of ascertaining these peoples' population numbers.

### *Education*

Education at the UEWWIL only encompasses elementary schools in the Jupaú villages, with the schools having been built using compensatory funds from construction of the Santo Antônio Hydroelectric Power Plant. Sadly, only the schools in the Alto Jaru village and Line 621 are operational. The others are inactive, and students are required to make treks to the surrounding schools.

The fact that there are few students in the Jupaú villages has led to discussions at the State Education Secretariat (SEDUC), led by the government's indigenous coordination representative, on closing the schools. The other schools operate in a precarious manner. Upon completion of elementary school and high school, indigenous students face difficulties in accessing higher education due to lacking the financial means to support themselves in other cities and in college.

## *Health and Sanitation*

The villages have public health stations, but they lack health professionals, which generates unstable and inconsistent conditions when it comes to providing healthcare and treating diseases. On occasion, health professionals go to the villages with nurses to offer some form of health care.

However, the usual course of action involves indigenous people being removed from their villages by cars from the Jaru Base Center so they may receive care at the Indigenous Healthcare Center (CASAI).

Furthermore, all villages have Indigenous Health Agents (AIS) and Indigenous Sanitation Agents (AISAM).

There is no basic sanitation. The situation of bathrooms and restrooms in the villages is deplorable and they are unfit for use (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2: Inside a bathroom. Photograph: DSEI/Promotion – 2022.



Figure 3: Outside the bathroom. Photograph: DSEI/Promotion – 2022.

## *Pandemic*

The Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land was one of the few areas in Rondônia that managed to go through the peak pandemic years (2020 and 2021) without the indigenous peoples being infected with COVID-19.

In 2022, due to lack of necessary care by the Uru-eu-wau-wau Ethno-environmental Protection Front in containing the pandemic, the Base do Bananeira area was contaminated with coronavirus. Furthermore, the lack of proper management led managers to send infected indigenous public servants from FUNAI to the Trincheira, Jamari, Linha 621 and Aldeia Nova villages, which led to contamination of the locals, and both COVID-19 and the flu spread throughout the other villages.

The only reason the situation did not have a worse outcome was because the indigenous people had already received three doses of the vaccines. The quarantine of the villages ended on February 10, 2022.

The status of the indigenous people at Base do Bananeira is unknown, and there is no information on whether isolated indigenous peoples were infected, since they tended to appear very near the Base do Bananeira area.

The Federal Supreme Court (STF), in response to a request from the Brazilian Articulation of Indigenous Peoples (APIB), in the context of the Action against the Violation of a Constitutional Fundamental Right (ADPF) 709, determined the creation of sanitary barriers to contain the spread of COVID-19. Contradicting this proposal, the FUNAI created a barrier that it refers to as “mobile”, which fails to provide even the most basic protection, since, when it moves from one point to another, it necessarily leaves the first area unprotected. This became clear when COVID-19 spread throughout the villages.

## *Leaders and threat status*

The Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land has multiple representatives since each village has a leader (Tabijara). The main leaders are:

1. Tari Uru-eu-wau-wau – Tabijara of the Jupaú people
2. Tari Amondawa – Tabijara of the Amondawa people
3. Waldemar Cabixi – leader of the Pedreira village of the Cabixi people
4. Hotor Oro win – leader of the Oro Towati people

In addition to the representation of traditional leaders, currently the-

re are also youth leaders represented by indigenous associations.

The UEWWIL includes the following representative associations:

1. Uru-eu-wau-wau/Jupaú Indigenous People's Association – president Bitate Uru-eu-wau-wau and Treasurer Tejub Uru-eu-wau-wau, who provides strong leadership to the Jupaú people.
2. Amondawa Indigenous People's Association – president Tambura Amondawa.

The Jupaú have developed multiple projects through several partnerships, all of which relating to monitoring and surveillance actions. They have been steadfast in defending their territory. For this purpose, they created a group of Forest Guardians that has monitored the Indigenous Land using only bows and arrows, expelling invaders and filing countless complaints before the Federal Prosecution Office (MPF), FUNAI, PF, IBAMA and ICMBio. This has endangered the lives of these individuals. Most Jupaú leaders, both men and women, have received death threats from invaders who live in the surroundings of the indigenous land.

2020 saw the murder of a great leader, Ari Uru-eu-wau-wau, a Forest Guardian, and it is believed he was killed due to his work defending the land.

Production in the supply chain has included the use of the Agriforesting System (SAF), and the system's small-scale farming operations do not use any agrochemicals.

The Amondawa have closer ties to the FUNAI and don't carry out land protection efforts. They have an extensive farming production operation that uses agrochemicals, with plenty of incentives from the FUNAI.

The other Cabixi and Oro Towati villages have small farming operations and depend more on hunting and fishing, in addition to government benefits with teacher salaries, emergency aid payouts, and the small-scale production and sale of crafts. They do not act in territorial protection efforts. Since they are located in the portion of the UEWWIL in which the boundaries are determined by rivers, they have not suffered much pressure from invaders.

### *Deforestation*

Incursions on the Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Land became more severe between 2018 and 2021. There was an increase in cases of land-grabbing in the Floresta River, Jamari village and Burareiro region, where the FUNAI's Base, Bananeira II, currently abandoned by the fe-



deral government, provides support to IL invaders.

The continued invasions and deforestation near the Jamari village, enabled by the lack of inspections in the Burareiro region, currently under litigation, has put the lives of indigenous people at risk. Between January 1st and the first week of February 2022, land-grabbers increased the deforested area in the Sete Tombos Waterfall region, on the Jamari River, encroaching on the Jamari indigenous village and placing its people on alert and under stress.

### *Reactivation of Barrier II*

Barrier II has been one of the main places through which invaders force their passage, particularly land-grabbers (Figure 4). On June 17, 2022, the Jupaú people, led by the Association of the Uru-eu-wau-wau/Jupaú Indigenous People, in a partnership with Kanindé and the Uru-eu-wau-wau Ethno-environmental Protection Front (FPEU), reactivated the Barrier and are maintaining an indigenous surveillance team with FUNAI public servants, who are cleaning the area, organizing the space, and monitoring its surroundings.

The idea is to maintain a permanent team that can count on police work, but the FUNAI has had trouble paying the policemen's daily rates. Further, the FPEU claims that the FUNAI/Ji-Paraná Regional Coordination (CR) does not reply to their requests.

Keeping the Barrier operational means blocking out one of the main places used by invaders.



Figure 4: Barrier II. Photograph: Bitaté Uru-eu-wau-wau, June 2022.

## *Isolated Indigenous Peoples*

In the region near the Linha 623 village, where the indigenous people collect nuts, Arikan Uru-eu-wau-wau and his group located traces of an isolated indigenous people he refers to as “Baixinhos” (the short people). The region is under attack from land-grabbers and loggers who deforest, steal nuts, and risk the lives of indigenous peoples, both those in contact with Western civilization and those that are isolated.

The Uru-eu-wau-wau Ethno-environmental Protection Front (FPEU), informed by Kanindé and Jupaú of the pressures occurring in this region, sent a team of indigenous public servants without a police escort to verify the deforestation and land-grabbing of which it was already aware. Thus, the team was unable to do anything other than confirm what had been informed to them. Meanwhile, the land-grabbers are installing fences around the area.

The information on the presence of isolated people was not verified. Given the pressures suffered by the UEWWIL, the FUNAI engaged in a public recruitment process, proceeding to hire a team for the Protection Front for six (6) months, with a possible extension for two (2) more years (Public Notice no. FUNAI/8-PSS/2021/SEAGAP/DAGES-FUNAI). 39 public servants were hired:

- 02 Ethno-environmental Protection leads;
- 03 Supervisors to remain at the headquarters in Ji-Paraná;
- 04 Leads of Protection Agents at the Cautário Base;
- 10 protection agents at the Bananeira Base;
- 20 protection agents at the Cautário Base.

The lack of management and planning is noticeable – despite the increase in staffing, these teams were concentrated on the two bases, leaving the rest of the indigenous land unprotected. In addition, we attribute the hardships to an internal dispute with the Ji-Paraná Regional Coordination, which argues against the fact that the Front is with the Local Technical Coordinator (CTL), a situation that jeopardizes the protection and support to productive activities. The CTL allotted to the Governador Jorge Teixeira region to serve the 6 Jupaú villages has remained at the Bananeira base, south of the Indigenous Land, leaving the indigenous peoples unassisted and unprotected.

Barreira II, a region that helps facilitate multiple invasions, is deactivated and instead being used as a place of support for invaders.

Though these teams have been hired to serve the Protection Front, isolated indigenous peoples occupy multiple parts of the land, and invasions in multiple regions put the lives of isolated and contacted



indigenous peoples at risk.

Since June 2022, the isolated indigenous people have started to wander near the Linha 623 village, which is believed to bear relation with the invasions of the Alto Jamari region. The Uru-eu-wau-wau Ethno-environmental Protection Front and the Coordination of Isolated and Recently-contacted Indigenous Peoples (CGIRC) were alerted of the events in a meeting held at the village on June 3, 2022.

### **Sete de Setembro Indigenous Land (SSIL)**

The Sete de Setembro IL (SSIL) is demarcated and its legal status ratified. The Paiter Suruí people live there, with four distinct clans: Gambe, Gamir, Makor, and Kaban. They are distributed throughout 30 villages within the limits of the Indigenous Land.

As part of the so-called "deforestation arc" in the Brazilian Legal Amazon region, the IL is surrounded by consolidated rural properties that demand new forest areas for agricultural activities and that entice indigenous people to rent pastures and plant farm crops. In addition to the problems mentioned above, there are (assisted) invasions by prospectors and loggers within.

### *Population and village*

The Paiter Suruí people currently inhabits 30 villages within a land of approximately 2,478.45 km<sup>2</sup> between the center-east region of the state of Rondônia, within the municipalities of Cacoal and Espigão D'Oeste, and the north-west portion of the state of Mato Grosso, in the municipality of Rondolândia, with a population of approximately 2,000 indigenous people.

### *Education*

Education in the Sete de Setembro Indigenous Land encompasses elementary school and high school levels. Classes are taught by indigenous and non-indigenous teachers.

Speakers of the Tupi Mondé language, the Paiter Suruí only talk among themselves using their mother tongue within the IL. When outsiders are present, they speak in Portuguese and Mondé.

They have been attempting to create the Paiter Suruí University for over 6 years and established a partnership with the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), which has been helping them assemble a curriculum and structure.

The indigenous people have a series of demands, mainly regarding



scholarship grants for the Paiter Suruí who attend college and have no means to support themselves in the city.

### *Health and the pandemic*

Health care is provided by the Special Indigenous Health District (DSEI) of Vilhena and by the Indigenous Health Care Center (CASAI), both located in Cacoal. The indigenous people go through triage and have appointments with the Brazilian Public Health Service (SUS). In some villages, there are Basic Health Centers (BHU), which are nothing more than small buildings with almost no medicine or equipment.

The villages have Indigenous Health Agents (AIS) and Indigenous Basic Sanitation Agents (AISAN), but there are no health professionals, such as doctors, nurses, and dentists. There are only teams classified as “mobile” teams that help provide some sort of care, but in an infrequent manner.

If any indigenous folk become ill, they are usually referred to Cacoal in order to receive care at hospitals and health centers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Paiter Suruí saw the highest tally of fatal victims in Rondônia, with 5 deaths.

### *Illegal activities*

#### *Prospecting*

Prospecting has been around the Paiter Suruí for over 10 years and has depended on the absence and, at times, participation of the FUNAI.<sup>4</sup>

This prospecting activity is a continuation of the prospecting within the Aripuanã IL. The situation has become more dire with the involvement of a few indigenous leaders and, from 2018 to 2022, the socio-environmental damages have increased (Figure 5).

4 “Servidor da Funai preso em operação por envolvimento em garimpo ilegal avisava cacique sobre operações em terra indígena em MT, diz PF”, G1. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/mt/mato-grosso/noticia/2022/03/21/servidor-da-funai-presos-em-operacao-por-envolvimento-em-garimpo-ilegal-avisava-cacique-sobre-operacoes-em-terra-indigena-em-mt-diz-pf.ghtml>. Accessed on: 20/04/2022.



Figure 5: Deforestation of the Sete Setembro Indigenous Land, Kanindé – 2022.

### *Timber theft*

Timber theft in the Sete de Setembro Indigenous Land is an activity that has been taking place since the first illegal contractual relationships were established in the region.

In 1988, the indigenous folk created the Suruí Indigenous People's Metareilá Association to fight and remove loggers, and attempt to break away from the attempts to lure local leaders. They also developed a reforestation project to reestablish the deforested areas.

Between 2018 and 2022, with the negligent and complicit behavior of the FUNAI, and with substantial illegal activity, there has been an unfortunate increase in deforestation, which is steadily engulfing the territory and generating conflict between indigenous people who are against the timber theft and those that have been persuaded by loggers.

### *Lease of the Sete de Setembro Indigenous Land*

Some indigenous leaders have been swayed by farmers with properties at the edge of the SSIL. These leaders lease a portion of the land, the farmers deforest and populate it with cattle, and although it seems like the cattle belongs to the indigenous people, the farmer is the actual owner, and as such the farmer is able to evade inspection processes and refrain from obtaining an environmental license for deforestation and burning. When the soil becomes depleted, the farmer

takes the cattle out and rents out another piece of land. This helps environmental damage spread throughout the territory.

These conflicts have created great risks for the indigenous people who fight to prevent the entry of loggers, prospectors, and land-grabbers. The indigenous leaders Almir Narayamoga Suruí, Txai Suruí, and Neidinha Suruí have received threats for denouncing this situation (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Txai Suruí. COP 26. Photograph: Gabriel Uchida – 2021.

The threats appear through people saying, for instance, that it's best not to move forward with these complaints, since they'll create an upheaval, and that the farmers may take actions that may cause problems to the lives of the activists, among other things. Since these threats are made by other indigenous folk, the activists prefer not to move forward with the complaints, and instead discuss this with the indigenous people themselves, showing how this type of action is harmful to them.

## *Fundamentalist religious missions*

The influence of fundamentalist religions, such as those of the *Assembléia de Deus*, Adventist, and Baptist denominations, have propagated the destruction of the Paiter Suruí people's culture, mainly when it comes to the religious actions of *pajés*, known as "pajelança". The *pajés* have begun to disappear because Evangelical priests state that they are connected to evil, to hell, and to the loss of one's soul.

These religions have also caused conflicts among the indigenous peoples themselves and influenced them to become involved with illegal activities, since for these individuals profit becomes connected to the non-indigenous God.

This is such a delicate topic that the indigenous leaders themselves who disagree with the presence of priests and their activities avoid discussing it so as to prevent further conflict.

This might be one of the greatest threats to the preservation of Paiter Suruí culture.

## *Political organization*

In 2010, the Paiter Suruí underwent a political reorganization and created a new type of governance based on the clan system and the Brazilian democracy model, creating the Paiter Suruí Parliament. This Parliament maintains clan lineages with their *labiway* (leaders) and their *Labiway Esaga* (great leader) and zone-based representation, according to which each zone is represented by a leader from each region.

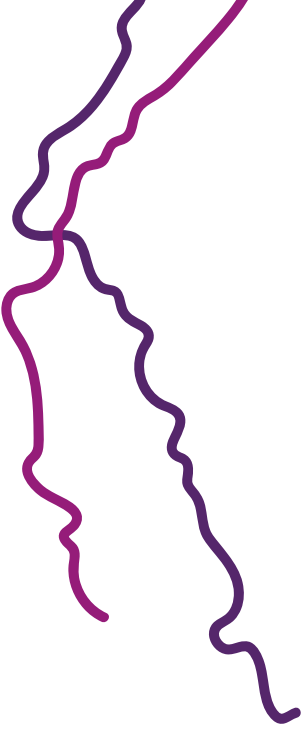
The *Labiway Esaga*, operating as a type of President, was chosen through direct votes, with electoral campaigns run and votes cast on ballots provided by the Regional Electoral Court (TRE).

The *labiway-ey* are chosen in the traditional manner, with each village choosing their leader to make up the Parliament within each zone.

The current *Labiway Esaga* is Almir Narayamoga Suruí, and since 2012 he has received death threats for his opposition to prospecting and timber theft in the Sete de Setembro indigenous land.

Almir Suruí has been attempting to unite the people in favor of environmental and cultural agendas. This will take time, but the situation is starting to show signs of improvement with the involvement of leaders who are no longer contributing to illicit activities and are now supporting the *Labiway Esaga*.





## *Defenders under threat*

The Gameb clan has been fighting to remove invaders from Indigenous Land. The main threatened leaders are:

1. Mopiry Suruí
2. Agamenon Suruí
3. Gasodá Suruí
4. Almir Narayamoga Suruí
5. Walelasoetxeige Paiter Bandeira Suruí
6. Neidinha Suruí

These defenders lack the financial means to protect themselves and their families. They are in constant danger, without any way to protect themselves, which is a travesty, given the fates of Ari Uru-eu-wau-wau, Bruno Pereira, and Dom Philips.<sup>5</sup>

Unprotected, psychologically shaken, but still resisting, they do not abandon their activism because they believe they may help save indigenous peoples and the forest.

## *Entities that attack indigenous peoples in Rondônia*

- Prospectors;
- Business owners, mainly those from Cacoal, Pimenta Bueno, and Espigão do Oeste;
- Farmers, particularly those situated at the edge of the IL limits in Line 9, Line 7, Line 8, Line 14, and Rondolândia leasing land from the IL.

<sup>5</sup> “‘Foi assassinato, não foi acidente’, diz família de Ari Uru-eu-wau-wau, morto em Rondônia”, Conselho Indigenista Missionário. Available at: <https://cimi.org.br/2020/04/foi-assassinato-nao-foi-acidente-diz-familia-de-ari-Uru-eu-wau-wau-morto-em-rondonia/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023; “A perda de Bruno Pereira e Dom Phillips evidencia o desmonte da política indigenista durante governo Bolsonaro”, Conselho Indigenista Missionário. Available at: <https://cimi.org.br/2022/08/a-perda-de-bruno-pereira-e-dom-phillips-evidencia-o-desmonte-da-politica-indigenista-durante-governo-bolsonaro/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.



## Reforestation

The reforestation effort began in 2003 with the support of Kanindé, which had funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>6</sup>

In 2010, support came from Aquaverd (a Swiss organization) in a partnership with Metareilá and Kanindé, with funds used to build tree nurseries and to reforest areas in other villages (Figure 12).



Figura 12. Reflorestamento. Fotografia: Kanindé/ Divulgação - 2022.

The reforestation project, referred to as Pamine since 2010, with the purpose of fighting deforestation and recovering degraded areas, is also currently being used for tourism to show how the Paiter Suruí developed the technique and manage to recover areas.

Approximately one million saplings of 17 different species were planted, and the Paiter Suruí continue to plant and generate income with this activity, which is now part of the tourism that has been developed.

<sup>6</sup> The dissertation by Chicoepab Suruí, “Reforestation of the Sete de Setembro Indigenous land: a change in perception and conduct of the Paiter Suruí people in Rondônia?” provides misleading information and analyses, quoting USAID without mentioning that the funds were part of a project by the Kanindé Ethno-environmental Defense Association and excluding the effect of fundamentalist religions on culture changes from his analyses. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the author graduated in theology and was estranged from his people for a long time.

## *2022 elections and indigenous lands*

The discourse of former Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro increased the pressure and invasions of the Uru-eu-wau-wau and Sete de Setembro Indigenous Lands, as well as the death threats against their defenders.

This situation worsened in the period that electoral advertisements were broadcasted, since the far-right campaigns included discourse of legalizing prospecting and leasing activities and authorizing timber extractions within the territories, as well as defending the reduction of indigenous areas.

The indigenous movement decided to launch its own candidates in 2022, and in Rondônia they backed Almir Suruí's candidacy through the PDT party and Leonice Tupari's candidacy through the Rede party, hoping that this would be the best way to have people representing their interests in Congress.

However, these indigenous folk lack financial support to run in equal conditions with other parties, which have more resources and have candidates with a longer political history and backing from the agribusiness sector, corporations, and the government. However, they believe this is a way in which society may discover their proposals and changes can be made in following elections.

It is worth noting that the agribusiness world supported the candidacy of indigenous individual Abigail Tupari, who is allied to their purposes.

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# **Territorial situation of the Arara people: Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land**

**Daniel Lopes Faggiano  
Indigenous Association of the Arara People of Cachoeira Seca – KOWIT  
Instituto Maíra**

## **Letter from the Arara people to the world**

Iriri Village, Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land<sup>7</sup>

Pará/Brazil

November 17, 2020.

We, the Arara indigenous people from the Iriri River, are tired of being misled by Norte Energia. We want respect! Ever since the Belo Monte powerplant arrived, our situation has only become worse. Our territory became the world's trading counter. Our forest is suffering intensely. Each passing day, we hear the increasingly louder sound of chainsaws devouring our territory. Our river is becoming sadder and weaker by the day. This is not normal. We are being attacked from all sides. We have never been in such a dire situation. We are very concerned with the future of our children and grandchildren. For how long will Norte Energia continue to fool us? Why haven't the disintrusion proceedings taken place at our Cachoeira Seca indigenous land? We ask that you all help us build a large-scale campaign for the defense of our territory.

The Arara people will never abandon its territory. Our warriors will not allow our forest to be destroyed. Together, we will protect our Iriri River.

*Timbektodem Arara, President of the KOWIT  
Association of the Arara People*

*Mobu Odo Arara, Chief of the Cachoeira Seca IL*

<sup>7</sup> Edited for clarity. Available at: <https://amazoniareal.com.br/a-barragem-de-belo-monte-maquagem-verde-contestada/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

17 11 2020

D S T Q Q S S

Carta do povo arara para o mundo  
Nós Indígenas Arara do Rio Iriri estamos  
consados de ser enganados pela a parte  
Emergia. Queremos respeito! Desde a chegada  
da usina de Belomonte, nossa situação só piorou  
nesso território se transformou na belção de  
negócio do mundo, nossa floresta está sofrendo  
muito. Cada dia que passa escutamos mais  
barulho dos matos e oas comendo o nosso  
território, nosso rio está cada dia mais triste  
e seco. Isso não é normal, estamos sendo  
atacados por todos os lados, nunca possomos tanta  
necessidade. Estamos muito preocupados com  
futuro dos nossos filhos e netos, até quando  
a parte Emergia vai continuar nos enganando  
por que até hoje não foi realizada a desintri-  
são da nossa terra indígena Pachelira, seça  
pedimos a todos que nos ajudem a construir  
uma grande campanha pela defesa do nosso  
território.

O povo Arara nunca vai abandonar nossos  
territórios, nossos guerreiros não vão permitir  
que a nossa floresta seja destruída.  
Juntos vamos proteger nosso rio Iriri.

Tumixteduy Arara Presidente da Associ-  
ação Keruit do povo Arara

Importante

Reunião

Planejamento

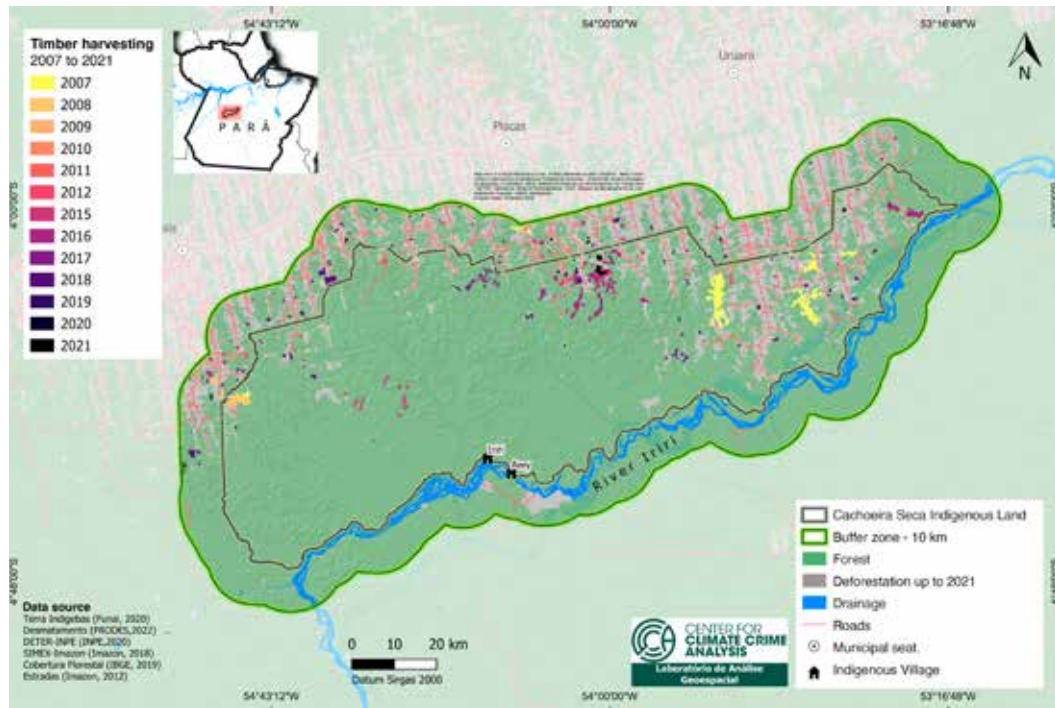
Outros Assuntos

Melba Odo Brazo

Kacique

## Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land

Located in the west of the state of Pará, between the Iriri and Xingu rivers, the Arara territory is marked by intense socio-environmental conflicts that make Pará one of the most violent states in the world for defenders of life and the environment.



The history of rights violations has been continuous since the 1970s, with the construction of the Trans-Amazonian Highway (BR-230),<sup>8</sup> cutting the Arara territory in half. Since then, blighted by the construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant, the area has been systematically looted by loggers, land-grabbers, major farmers and other invaders. In that sense, mining represents yet another threat to the Arara people.

According to the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) and the Amazon Watch, “the Volta Grande project is a development by Belo Sun Mineração, a subsidiary of the Canadian Belo Sun Mining Corp, which seeks to establish itself within the municipality of Senador José Porfírio, in the state of Pará. Should it be implemented, the Volta Grande will be the largest open-air gold mining operation in Brazil – and the final blow against the Volta Grande do Xingu region in the state of Pará, already affected by the Belo Monte power plant. [...] The implementation of the Volta Grande project may be the death of the Xingu river, the ecocide of a vital region for life on earth. The direct and indirect socio-environmental impacts of the Volta Grande project particularly affect the hundreds of riverside dwellers,

<sup>8</sup> Around 30 years later, the new works to asphalt the Trans-Amazonian Highway continue to disrespect the rights of the Arara people and to avoid making the LPI consultation. Most of the highway is not yet paved.



fisherpeople, farmers, and indigenous communities who live in the region. In addition to the Juruna, Arara and Xikrin, Volta Grande harbors many indigenous peoples and multiple riparian and traditional communities. In spite of the advanced stage of licensing of the project, most of these communities were not duly consulted.”<sup>9</sup>

Though it was ratified in April 2016 with an extension of 7,886.33 km<sup>2</sup>, the government has never removed the over 1,200 non-indigenous families who live inside the Arara territory. This situation becomes worse with each passing day.



Source: National Space Survey Institute (INPE)

According to the National Space Survey Institute (INPE), the rate at which the Cachoeira Seca IL forest shrinks has increased at an alarming rate in the last six years. The institute, which has collected data since 2008, shows that, in the year of 2014, 5.8 km<sup>2</sup> were deforested. In 2017, the deforestation reached 15.9 km<sup>2</sup> and, in 2018, it exceeded 50 km<sup>2</sup>, demonstrating an increase of 260%. In 2020, the IL lost 72.4 km<sup>2</sup> of its forest to illegal deforestation. Between 2008 and 2020, the Arara territory lost a total of 367.9 km<sup>2</sup> of forest land.

9 "Cumplicidade na destruição", Co-authored by the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil and Amazon Watch, 2021. Available at: <https://cumplicidadedestruicao.org/belo-sun>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

## *Political organization*

The KOWIT Association was created in 2017 to defend the interests of the Arara people of the Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land. The name of the Association is a tribute to Kowit, a great warrior who was assassinated, so that the people will never forget his courage, determination, will, culture, and ancestry.

The association currently represents two villages: Iriri and Away. In 2019, due to the increasing invasions and territorial violation of the Arara people, the Association placed the subject of territorial rights as its top priority. Strategic planning has included bringing these complaints to the international stage.

In its activities, the KOWIT Association has strengthened the culture of the Arara people and has contributed towards territorial defense with, for instance, environmental territory management projects. Today, the Association benefits from the technical expertise of an attorney and an indigenist and is involved in a network with other partners and allies.

In 2020, the Association launched the “Guardiões do Iriri” Campaign in a partnership with the Maíra Institute as a way to centralize and mobilize all actions and efforts of KOWIT and its allies. The name given to the campaign refers back to the definition of the United Nations that the main guardians of the environment, as scientifically proven, are the indigenous peoples.

To follow the “Guardiões do Iriri” Campaign, visit their:

- Website<sup>10</sup>
- Public Civil Petition<sup>11</sup>
- Instagram<sup>12</sup>
- YouTube<sup>13</sup>

10 Available at: <http://guardioesdoiriri.org.br>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

11 Available at: [https://www.change.org/p/presidente-da-republica-federativa-do-brasil-um-pacto-de-paz-pela-protecao-da-vida-e-preservacao-da-terra-ind%C3%ADgena-cachoeira-seca-pa?recruiter=657239351&recruited\\_by\\_id=0ba57d90-cd0e-11e6-89ff-477da6f4b2f8&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=copylink&utm\\_campaign=psf\\_combo\\_share\\_abi](https://www.change.org/p/presidente-da-republica-federativa-do-brasil-um-pacto-de-paz-pela-protecao-da-vida-e-preservacao-da-terra-ind%C3%ADgena-cachoeira-seca-pa?recruiter=657239351&recruited_by_id=0ba57d90-cd0e-11e6-89ff-477da6f4b2f8&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_abi). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

12 Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/guardioesdoiriri/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

13 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxqUiZDKynOvoqEqaNWHLPg>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

## *Deforestation and illegal activities*

The main illegal activities in the Cachoeira Seca indigenous land are timber extraction (deforestation, theft, and trade) and illegal cattle breeding. Cachoeira Seca has been among the three most deforested indigenous lands in Brazil, at least in the last five years.

“Victim of its own wealth, the indigenous territory lost over 28,000 soccer fields of vegetation between 2017 and 2020 alone. The deforestation is evident with ample images and numbers. Cachoeira Seca has been deforested since 2008 and the pace has increased in the last few years.”<sup>14</sup>

Since it is a land of over 700,000 square kilometers, it is difficult to properly conceive of the scope and dimensions of this impact. As in the case of climate change, it becomes perceptible over time. In general, the impact of this deforestation is the reduction of hunting, more intense river pollution, and lower numbers of fish. The large chestnut trees and most of the trumpet trees have been torn down.



Photograph: Instituto Maíra/Promotion – 2022

Consequently, the indigenous folk no longer feel comfortable hunting far from their dwellings and being far from their villages – within the territory, but away from the village. This is because, when camping in the woods, one can hear the chainsaws approaching in the middle of the night. Hence, the use of the territory itself becomes restricted by fear of encountering a logger or invader in their land.

One must also mention the over three thousand non-indigenous pe-

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://especiais.g1.globo.com/g1-15-anos/2021/amazonia-meio-ambiente-devastacao/>. Accessed on: February 2023.



ople who live illegally within the territory. Vila Maribel was created before the indigenous territory was outlined by INCRA for the benefit of a logging company. The outlining took place later, but without the necessary expulsion efforts. In other words, the logging company left, but the people stayed.

However, most of the people who went there in the past in good faith and, arguably, with at least some legal entitlement, could not handle it: there is no structure, no government support, and some people began to purchase and combine plots of land. The people who were there in good faith have the support of the Arara people, so that all their rights may be fully respected throughout the process.

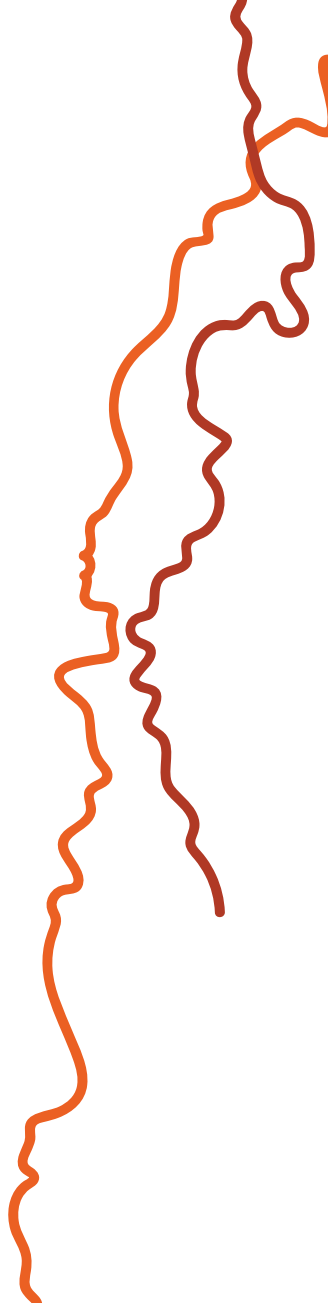
Hence, territorial invasion and clandestine land management are illegal activities that persist in the Cachoeira Seca IL, to such a degree that the company Equatorial Energia provides electric power to the non-indigenous people who live there illegally. "According to the Federal Prosecution Office, the utility company continued with the works to build three structures in indigenous lands even after being rebuked by the IBAMA and the FUNAI during the construction permit request."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, there are over twenty requests for gold prospecting studies around the IL, indicating a new course of action that will have to be faced in the efforts to protect the territory and its populations.



Photograph: Milton Guran.

15 Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2022/07/mpf-denuncia-equatorial-para-por-distribuicao-ilegal-de-energia-em-terra-indigena.shtml>. Accessed on: February 2023.





## *Leaders and threat status*

The leaders of the Arara people are constantly under threat. However, this is not an isolated or even recent state of affairs. Over the course of history, emblematic cases of violence and extermination have been a part of the Arara people's trajectory, such as in the murder of two important indigenous leaders, the warrior Kowit and Karaya Arara.

Kowit was an important Arara warrior, fearless and powerful, who defended his people's land with much bravery and wit. Kowit's history was interrupted when, in an undetermined date, he was ambushed by non-indigenous people who cut off his limbs and spread his body through the forest to set fear in the Arara people.

In Karaya Arara's case, according to documentation on the case, in May 2000 his body was found floating on the Iriri river, in Altamira, after being reported missing for days. At the time, the murder suspicions already indicated that the crime was related to the actions of fishermen who violently and illegally operated in the territory. This criminal activity represented a constant threat to the safety and to the very survival of the Arara people. As in the case of Kowit, no culprits have been found for this hideous crime to this day, and thus justice has not been served, which reinforces the impunity and insecurity to which the Arara have long been exposed.

In addition to all these atrocities, it is important to emphasize the intersection between the threats and gender-based violence. The Arara women have historically suffered cases of assault and harassment. As much as they are warriorlike and fight for being valued, recognized and respected, the negative impacts from the reported cases of violence are even more intense for them.

In total, approximately one hundred indigenous people and over three thousand non-indigenous people live inside the Arara territory (the latter in an illegal capacity). To access this territory, the nearest port is the non-indigenous village of people living illegally within the indigenous territory. This situation is a powder keg that must be handled with great diplomatic skill. Added to the fact that the state of Pará is the place with the most murdered activists in Brazil,<sup>16</sup> there are feelings of unease when walking alone in the city and entering and exiting the village.

In practice, the threats are not direct or literal. The threats take the form of constant harassment from loggers, politicians, and other people saying "don't do this, don't do that, let the timber move throu-

<sup>16</sup> Global Witness (2022). Available at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/decade-defiance/#accounting-over-half-2021-attacks-mexico-colombia-and-brazil>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

gh”. On the other hand, this situation requires diplomacy with the non-indigenous so that they don’t get the impression that the intention is to remove them. This is because the territorial defense of the Cachoeira Seca IL is a constitutional obligation determining that the government, through its public institutions, has the obligation of fully preserving and protecting the Arara territory.

Furthermore, this harassment may take place through calls to the chief offering dinner parties and gifts. “You’d better accept this, because I am going to do this other thing”, which leads to an impasse: to accept may mean collusion; to deny may mean making an enemy.

### *Health and the pandemic*

There is currently a Basic Health Center (UBS) in the village. Compared to the rest of Brazil, this UBS is relatively well-structured, although it counts with the sporadic presence of a nurse on site and at times lacking some medication. The Arara people currently have two indigenous women who have graduated and are working as assistant nurses.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the Arara were completely abandoned. The Bolsonaro administration sent them countless boxes of chloroquine for them to take, which didn’t happen only because an Arara elder dreamt that they were not supposed to take the drug, so they sent all the boxes back.

According to a statement by an Arara man to the Survival organization in June 2020, “We are deeply concerned. The health station [near the village] has no medicine or respirators. We wanted a respirator at this station so we wouldn’t have to go to the city. The village is a three days’ journey away from the city, which is where the hospital is located. We are asking for protection against these coronavirus cases. [The number of invaders] has increased a lot because [the control inspections] have stopped. With this interruption in activities, they are taking out a lot of timber, a lot of it. The government is not controlling this. There are too many invaders in the area.”<sup>17</sup> Monthly data from the Radar-based Deforestation Assessment System (Sirad) show that, during the pandemic, in the second quarter of 2020 (between April and June), deforestation increased by 51% in the IL, reporting 0.548 km<sup>2</sup> in new deforested areas.<sup>18</sup>

The Arara indigenous people of the Cachoeira Seca do Irii Indigenous

<sup>17</sup> Available at: <https://www.survivalbrasil.org/ultimas-noticias/12413/>. Accessed on: February 2023.

<sup>18</sup> J.D. Prieto, SAR EWS - Manual do Usuário. Versão SIRAD-A. V1.0. Instituto Socioambiental, São Paulo, 2020.

Land reported the highest rate of infection with COVID-19 known in the Brazilian Amazon. To contextualize the gravity of this event, had ten elderly individuals died, all of the elders would be gone. Thankfully, no one died. According to them, this happened because they produced medicine from the bark of a specific tree, resulting from their traditional knowledge, which they even distributed in tea form to a few river dwellers and other indigenous relatives.

However, the vaccination effort was complicated by the history of threats and fake news. It took a daily effort to increase awareness, since, at first, they did not want to take the vaccine, but ultimately did so.

Around a year after the start of the pandemic, the Brazilian Articulation of Indigenous Peoples (APIB) filed a lawsuit before the Federal Supreme Court (STF) requesting sanitary barriers. As a result, a sanitary barrier was created in the Iriri river, which is the river of the Arara people in the Cachoeira Seca indigenous land. Since this barrier is under the control of the Army, it provided a modicum of help, with the Arara people receiving some form of care in preventing timber theft – though it was not a very effective barrier since, in practice, many people crossed it.

### *2022 elections*

Among other things, the legacy of the Bolsonaro administration for all indigenous peoples centers on the dismantling of socio-environmental protections and indigenous-defense legislation, and the weakening and rigging of the FUNAI with more military-aligned and evangelical personnel.

With these worse conditions, the FUNAI did not move forward with the eviction process. Though the demarcated Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land has been ratified, an organized eviction effort has stalled at the FUNAI offices.

The consequences of this nefarious state of affairs were grave. These consequences included creating an idea in the region that the former president would embrace, cover up, and protect land invaders and illegal loggers. This increased insecurity regarding health and violence. Aside from the higher number of invaders, these groups further armed themselves. The government's lack of interest was also reflected in the absence of dialogue.

In this sense, expectations for the recently elected administration of President Lula include him fixing the mistakes of his own party, fulfilling the conditions of indigenous protections for the construction of the Belo Monte power plant, and at least respecting the necessary socio-environmental mitigations. It was the Workers' Party (PT), in

the administration of former President Dilma Rousseff, that built the Belo Monte plant. At the time, the eviction – the removal of non-indigenous people – and the construction of the surveillance base were conditions established by the Federal Prosecution Office for the construction of the power plant. However, the hydroelectric power plant is already built and operational, and the conditions for its construction were not met.



Graphic by the Arara people. Source: Instituto Maira/Promotion - 2022.

Therein lies the challenge: how does one remove three thousand people from where they currently live? Considering that some of those people came there in good faith, would be entitled to compensation and deserve to be respected, the INCRA could at least organize itself to define possible settlement locations and available lands in the region. This requires the participation of national forces, because those people won't leave without issue.

Then, after territorial regularization, which would benefit everyone in terms of maintaining the socio-political climate, it must be considered what kinds of attacks the indigenous people could suffer when going to the city to run errands? How does one recover and monitor (watch) this entire degraded area with one hundred inhabitants?

The answer to these great challenges could lie in the combination of dialogue, structure, support, investment, and safety. The Cachoeira Seca territory will be defended by the Arara themselves, for they are the protagonists of their territory. However, only a major coalition in the defense of life and the environment may provide the Arara with the material conditions that enable them to protect that territory.



## Timeline

**1970**

- “Land without men for men without land”. Creation of the National Integration Plan (PIN).
- The National Institute for Settlement and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) starts a settlement process within the Arara territory through a contract signed with the Tritícola Serrana Ltda cooperative (Cotrijuí). Approximately two thousand families are transferred there.
- Construction begins of the Trans-Amazonian Highway (BR-230)<sup>19</sup> – without an environmental expert report of economic feasibility study. The traditional territory of the Arara people is cut in half by the highway, distancing Arara subgroups from each other in terms of their social interactions.

**1972**

- Launch of the first segment of the BR-230 highway, with a solemn event by the Xingu river (Altamira-PA).

**1976**

- Increase in the number of deaths and conflicts with non-indigenous invaders. Violent reaction of the Arara in response to contact attempts by the FUNAI.

**1981**

- First official contact between the FUNAI and the Arara people with a subgroup located south of the BR-230 highway and another north of the highway (both subgroups currently reside within the Arara IL).

**1984**

- Construction of the Trans-Iriri<sup>20</sup> highway by Madeireira Bannach Ltda.<sup>21</sup> (authorized by INCRA – a road neighboring BR-

<sup>19</sup> Available at: <https://xingumais.org.br/obra/transamazonica-br-230-trecho-maraba-pa-ruropolis-pa>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>20</sup> Available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/index.php/acervo/noticias/trans-iriri-mais-uma-estrada-ilegal-desmatando-amazonia>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023

<sup>21</sup> Available at: <https://transparencia.cc/dados/cnpj/05253810000769-PA-madeireira-bannach-ltda/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

230 arriving at Vila Maribel,<sup>22</sup> left bank of the Iririri river, currently around 200 km long).



**1985**

- Blocking of 1,060,400 ha (including the current territories of the Arara IL and the Cachoeira Seca IL) to protect the Arara Territory through the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ordinance No. 1,854/85 PP).

**1987**

- Official contact between the FUNAI and the Arara subgroup that currently resides in the Cachoeira Seca IL. This subgroup was located near the spring of the Cachoeira Seca Igarapé. At the time, this subgroup was made up of barely over 30 individuals descending from one woman, Tjibié Arara.

**1988**

- Congressman Nicias Ribeiro (PT/PA)<sup>23</sup> denounces the illegal logging action at the Arara indigenous lands.

**1989**

- Anthropologist Wilma Leitão becomes the coordinator of the FUNAI task force, created to identify the boundaries of the Cachoeira Seca IL. Together with sertanista Afonso Alves da Cruz, they start to work in order to demarcate the IL.

**1990**

- Anthropologist Wilma Leitão presents her first boundary proposal<sup>24</sup> for the Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Land, with the northernmost boundary being the Olhões Igarapé, recommending that the area between the aforementioned Igarapé and the Arara IL remain blocked. According to the study itself, the report is incomplete; a survey of the INCRA settlement projects along the Trans-Amazonian Highway was not carried out. In the study, the Madeireira Bannach logging company is named the main party responsible for devastating the area.

<sup>22</sup> Available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/acervo/fotos/paisagem/visal-geral-do-porto-maribel-na-margem-do-rio-iriri-pa>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>23</sup> Available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/acervo/noticias/nicias-denuncia-retirada-de-madeira-da-reserva-dos-arara>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>24</sup> Available at: [https://documentacao.socioambiental.org/noticias/anexo\\_noticia/36\\_20090616\\_112140.pdf](https://documentacao.socioambiental.org/noticias/anexo_noticia/36_20090616_112140.pdf). Accessed on 25/03/2023.



**1991**

- The Federal Prosecution Office (MPF) files a repossession lawsuit against Madeira Bannach (Case number: 000000688.1991.4.01.3902, previous number: 91.00.00456-1).<sup>25</sup>
- A federal court grants an injunction determining that Madeira Bannach should vacate the site. That same month, two bailiffs, accompanied by the Federal Police and the president of the FUNAI, went to Madeira Bannach to enforce a repossession order. According to the then-president of the FUNAI, the company rejected the repossession and merely interrupted its activities. In May of 1991, the same judge reconsiders the immediate nature of the repossession.<sup>26</sup>

**1992**

- Through municipal law no. 388, the Altamira Municipal Council elevates the Madeira Bannach processing center (at the left bank of the Iriri river and within the Cachoeira Seca IL) to the category of village, thus creating the Porto Bannach District.<sup>27</sup>

**1993**


- Maurício Corrêa, the Minister of Justice, signs Ordinance No. 26/1993, which declares that, for demarcation purposes, the Cachoeira Seca IL has an extension of 7,600 km<sup>2</sup>. For the first time, an attempt is made to reunify the Arara territory, continually connecting the limits of the Arara IL with the Cachoeira Seca IL limits.
- The mayors of Altamira, Uruará and Rurópolis alert the minister of Justice, Maurício Corrêa, of the possibility of armed conflict between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous individuals.
- The Missionary Indigenist Council (CIMI) denounces the operations of logging companies within Arara territory, particularly Madeira Bannach, for the unlawful removal of mahogany in the region and the encouragement of conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous people.<sup>28</sup>
- After pressure by politicians from Altamira, Uruará, Ru-

25 Source: O Liberal newspaper, March 12, 1991.

26 Source: O Liberal newspaper, May 28, 1991.

27 Available at: <https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/pa/bannach/historico>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

28 Source: Jornal do Brasil, January 28, 1993.



rópolis and Medicilândia, the Federal Prosecutor and Co-ordinator of the Defense of Indigenous People's Rights and Interests of the Federal Prosecution Office, Wagner Gonçalves, state the unlawful nature of ordinance no. 26/1993.

**1994**

- Seeking to define the Arara territorial issue, the FUNAI issues ordinance No. 428/PRES for the preparation of a new anthropologic report. Márnio Teixeira-Pinto is selected for the leading role.
- Márnio Teixeira-Pinto hands over a final report of the study, refuting the idea that the Arara from the Arara and Cachoeira Seca Indigenous Lands would be from different ethnicities. He also defends the creation of a continual territory for Arara subgroups, informing that the separation of the subgroups did not take place voluntarily, but rather due to the constant territorial violations suffered by the Arara people in the last few decades.

**1996**

- Political and economic groups, displeased with the Cachoeira Seca IL demarcation process, file for five writs of mandamus at the Superior Court of Justice (STJ) to stall the process. Two writs of mandamus are granted by the STJ.

**1997**

- The STJ grants the writ of mandamus and voids ordinance No. 26/1993. The grant was based on the fragility of the studies that supported the increase of the area from 686,501 ha to 760,000 ha.

**1999**

- The Arara people detain eight men who were clearing a road to transport timber within the Cachoeira Seca IL.<sup>29</sup>

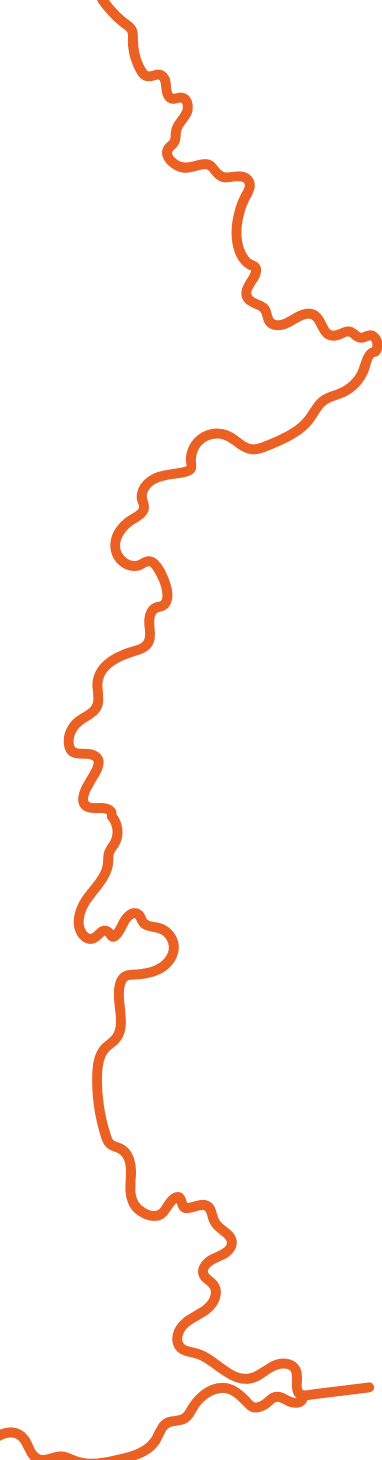
**2000**

- A complaint is filed<sup>30</sup> describing an attack suffered by Arara indigenous people and the CIMI team within the Arara terri-

<sup>29</sup> Source: O Liberal newspaper, May 21, 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/acervo/documentos/caso-karaya-relatorio-de-ocorrencias-pin-iriri-maio-de-2000>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.





tory. The attack was an ambush in the region of Dois Irmãos: the victims were shot at by armed fishermen and loggers, resulting in the murder of Karaya (Karaja) Arara. To this day, the case has not been closed and the culprits remain unidentified.

## 2004

- A delegation of the Arara people<sup>31</sup> is sent to Brasília and hands the minister of Justice, Cláudio Luiz Beirão, a petition with 23,000 signatures in favor of the demarcation of the traditional Arara territory.
- Increased tensions in the region: the president of the Rural Workers' Union and candidate for Mayoral office in Uruará, Paulo Medeiros, states: "We will prevent this. We will not accept the demarcation".
- In July 2004, the FUNAI becomes aware of the cancellation of ordinance 26/1993 and paralyzes the Cachoeira Seca IL demarcation process.
- In a protest against the demarcation of the Cachoeira Seca IL, around 300 farmers and small landowners block a bridge on the Trans-Amazonian Highway near the municipality of Placas/PA.<sup>32</sup>
- The FUNAI publishes Ordinance No. 1,442, establishing a new task force to produce additional studies for the outlining of the Cachoeira Seca IL, with the purpose of defusing any opposition to the demarcation and of updating information on the Arara territory.

## 2006

- The Federal Prosecution Office files a public civil lawsuit demanding that the FUNAI present a definitive report on the demarcation of the Cachoeira Seca IL. At the time, the federal prosecutor in Altamira, Marco Antônio de Almeida, stated: "How are we to prevent land invasions, environmental crimes perpetrated on a daily basis, and the permanent threat of extinction of the Arara ethnicity with this blatant omission by the government?"
- Presentation of additional studies by the FUNAI coordinated by anthropologist Maria Helena Amorim Pinheiro, preserving

<sup>31</sup> Available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/index.php/acervo/noticias/povo-arara-de-cachoeira-seca-entrega-abaixo-assinado-no-ministerio-da-justica>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>32</sup> Source: O Estado de São Paulo newspaper, July 22, 2004.

the continuity through both of the Arara people's indigenous lands.

**2008**

- The Ministry of Justice issues Ordinance No. 1,235/2008, declaring that the Arara had permanent ownership of the Cachoeira Seca IL, with a surface of 734,027 ha.

**2009**

- The resistance of non-indigenous people, supported by the Rural Workers' Union (STTR) of Uruará, with the purpose of interrupting the demarcation effort, leads the Federal Prosecution Office to request support from the Federal Police to monitor the IL's physical demarcation activities.

**2010**

- The IBAMA grants the Preliminary Permit for the Belo Monte HPP, establishing 19 conditions relative to the indigenous populations. From these conditions, we would emphasize the condition signed by Norte Energia,<sup>33</sup> in which the company made a commitment to the physical demarcation, ratification, and complete eviction of the Cachoeira Seca IL.
- The Federal Prosecution Office presses further in order to obtain information from the FUNAI on the continuity of the IL's physical demarcation process.
- The FUNAI informs the Federal Prosecution Office that the demarcation was not concluded due to violent actions by the non-indigenous population.



**2011**

- The IBAMA issues Installation Permit (IP) no. 795/2011, which allows the construction of the Belo Monte HPP to begin. The Federal Prosecution Office states that the IBAMA was irresponsible granting the IP because the conditions to begin construction had not been met by Norte Energia.<sup>34</sup>
- Conclusion of the physical demarcation of the Cachoeira Seca IL.
- “Protection does not secure forests”<sup>35</sup> – The growing deforestation of the Cachoeira Seca IL.
- The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) requests that “any works be prevented until minimum conditions are observed”.<sup>36</sup>

**2013**

- Deforestation<sup>37</sup> at the Cachoeira Seca IL: 47 km<sup>2</sup>.

**2014**

- 320 protesting indigenous people and riverside dwellers gather, occupying the main pathways to access the Belo Monte HPP worksite.

**2015**

- The board of IBAMA withdraws the Operating Permit to Belo Monte, conditioning it to the fulfillment of the works’ ten pending socio-environmental matters (the conditions regarding indigenous affairs were not analyzed by the entity because the board attributed this responsibility to the FUNAI).
- The Federal Prosecution Office of Altamira issues two recommendations to the FUNAI: one is specifically in relation to the protection of the territory of the Arara indigenous people of Cachoeira Seca. The other warned the entity regarding the need to press the Federal Government for the fulfillment of conditions referring to the exclusive use by the Arara of their territory (Official Letter No. 3931201 5IPRM/ATMIGABI).

<sup>34</sup> Source: O Globo newspaper, June 6, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Available at: <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/pt-br/noticia/107001>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>36</sup> Available at: [https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2011/04/110405\\_belomonte\\_oea\\_pai](https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2011/04/110405_belomonte_oea_pai). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

<sup>37</sup> Available at: <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/pt-br/noticia/125892>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

- An action by the IBAMA arrests 9 people in *flagrante delicto* due to finding them cutting down trees within the Cachoeira Seca IL.
- Public Civil Lawsuit by the Federal Prosecution Office warning of the imminent risk of ethnocide of the Cachoeira Seca Arara people.<sup>38</sup>
- Issuance of the Belo Monte HPP Operating permit.<sup>39</sup>

## 2016

- Special rapporteur of the United Nations, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, visits the Cachoeira Seca IL and asks for the implementation of the conditions<sup>40</sup> established for the Belo Monte HPP.
- On April 5, the Presidency of the Republic publishes a ratifying decree<sup>41</sup> for the Cachoeira Seca IL in the Federal Official Gazette (DOU), demarcating an area of 7,336.88 km<sup>2</sup> as being under permanent possession and exclusive usufruct of the Arara people.<sup>42</sup>
- The Arara people come forth with a complaint<sup>43</sup> stating that conflicts in their territory have increased after their lands were ratified and demanding eviction and other actions to control invasions by loggers and land-grabbers.
- Letter from the Arara people: “After the land ratification, instead of feeling safer, we have noticed more intense reactions from the groups that are interested in our territory, who have begun threatening us directly. If the eviction and/or control actions don’t happen soon, there is a high risk that the number of invasions, the illegal timber extraction, and the deforestation will all increase within our area, and our safety will become worse”.
- Group of loggers invade<sup>44</sup> the Arara IL.
- Creation of the Indigenous Association of the Arara People of

38 Available at: <https://ox.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/ficha-tecnica/node/202/edit/2020-08/Inicial%20ACP%20Etnoc%C3%ADdio.pdf>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

39 Available at: [https://ox.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/ficha-tecnica/node/202/edit/2018-06/LO\\_Belo\\_Monte.pdf](https://ox.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/ficha-tecnica/node/202/edit/2018-06/LO_Belo_Monte.pdf). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

40 Available at: <https://conflitosambientaismg.lcc.ufmg.br/noticias/relatora-especial-da-onu-sobre-povos-indigenas-divulga-comunicado-final-apos-visita-ao-brasil/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

41 Available at: <https://pesquisa.in.gov.br/imprensa/jsp/visualiza/index.jsp?jornal=1&pagina=1&data=05/04/2016>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

42 Available at: <https://brasil.mongabay.com/2016/07/indios-arara-finalmente-obtem-direito-terras/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

43 Available at: <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/pt-br/noticia/169223>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

44 Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2019/01/06/indios-arara-temem-confronto-com-posseiros-que-invadiram-reserva-indigena-no-para.ghtml>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.



45 Available at: [https://ox.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/ficha-tecnica/node/196/edit/2019-04/Manifestacao\\_DNIT\\_Carta%20Arara%20março%202018.pdf](https://ox.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/ficha-tecnica/node/196/edit/2019-04/Manifestacao_DNIT_Carta%20Arara%20março%202018.pdf). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

46 Available at: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/politica/noticia/2019-11/belo-monte-liga-ultima-turbina-e-inicia-operacao-completa>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

47 Available at: <https://www.survivalbrasil.org/ultimas-noticias/12413>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

48 Available at: <https://apiboficial.org/2020/08/01/adpf-709-no-supremo-povos-indigenas-e-o-direito-de-existir/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

49 Available at: <https://amazoniareal.com.br/a-barragem-de-belo-monte-maquagem-verde-contestada/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

50 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vhd3nrEogY>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

51 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyHxoldi6tg>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.



fense of Indigenous Peoples' Rights.<sup>52</sup>

- Arara delegation denounces rights violations at the 6th Chamber of the Federal Prosecution Office and at the following embassies: Canada, Russia, Belgium, Germany, Norway, and Japan.
- Public Civil Lawsuit filed by the Federal Prosecution Office on the consensus hydrogram.<sup>53</sup>

## 2022

- Release of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation Protocol of the Arara people of Cachoeira Seca.<sup>54</sup>
- The State Court of Altamira suspends the environmental permit of the Belo Sun mining company, issued by the Environment and Sustainability State Secretariat (SEMAS).<sup>55</sup> Up until now, the peoples of the Iriri river have not been included in the socio-environmental impact assessment.
- The Arara people press the DNIT regarding the absence of a consultation for the paving of 250 kilometers of BR 230, between Medicilândia and Rurópolis.<sup>56</sup>
- Ten murders are committed in Altamira within five days.<sup>57</sup>
- The IBAMA seizes a thousand cattle at the Cachoeira Seca IL.<sup>58</sup> The action results in the arrest of Wagmar Carneiro (father of the mayor of Brasil Novo) as the main suspect.
- The FUNAI creates a commission to pay compensation to non-indigenous people who live within the Cachoeira Seca IL.<sup>59</sup>

52 Available at: <http://frenteparlamentarindigena.com.br/povo-arara-da-terra-indigena-cachoeira-seca-lanca-campanha-em-defesa-de-direitos-territoriais/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

53 Available at: [http://www.mpf.mp.br/pa/sala-de-imprensa/documentos/2021/decisao\\_tutela\\_provisoria\\_hidrograma\\_hidreletrica\\_belo\\_monte\\_junho\\_2021.pdf](http://www.mpf.mp.br/pa/sala-de-imprensa/documentos/2021/decisao_tutela_provisoria_hidrograma_hidreletrica_belo_monte_junho_2021.pdf). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

54 Available at: <https://ox.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/ficha-tecnica/node/196/edit/2022-04/protocolo%20cachoeira%20seca%20web.pdf>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

55 Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/17nvvPKnugpG0j3I5IAlMfITwjjwBNpGR/view>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

56 Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2022/05/povo-indigena-arara-cria-protocolo-para-negociar-obras-em-seu-territorio.shtml>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

57 Available at: <https://twitter.com/brumelianebrum/status/1525832675713499136>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

58 Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2022/05/21/operacao-em-terra-indigena-de-cachoeira-seca-apreende-1000-animais-bovinos-e-aplica-multa-de-mais-de-r-2-milhoes.ghtml>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

59 Available at: [https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2022/06/27/funai-cria-comissao-para-pagar-indenizacoes-a-nao-indigenas-que-vivem-na-ti-cachoeira-seca-no-para.ghtml?fbclid=IwAR1EyZDnLHeb5g2xbI1-tKoMQOeiqz\\_jhh8oLUmHsW9AoVwnUGqpFKnWzUE](https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2022/06/27/funai-cria-comissao-para-pagar-indenizacoes-a-nao-indigenas-que-vivem-na-ti-cachoeira-seca-no-para.ghtml?fbclid=IwAR1EyZDnLHeb5g2xbI1-tKoMQOeiqz_jhh8oLUmHsW9AoVwnUGqpFKnWzUE). Accessed on: 25/03/2023.



# Final considerations



By Antenor Vaz<sup>60</sup> and Daniel Lopes Faggiano<sup>61</sup>

The Brazilian Amazon and Cerrado biomes encompass the largest number of records of indigenous people in isolation and recently contacted<sup>62</sup> worldwide.<sup>63</sup> These are peoples that resist and insist on maintaining their way of life, in spite of having their existences profoundly affected by the expansion of consumerist society.

This way of life, though different for each indigenous people, in general carries the same understanding of the importance of nature, flora and fauna, rivers and forests, climate maintenance and, consequently, human life. These peoples, known as original peoples, are experts at listening, discussing, caring, and enhancing the relation of women and men with their territories. This traditional and ancestral knowledge, permeated with mythical explanations, has concrete forms of ensuring socio-environmental balance, establishing a harmonic relationship that is essential to human life. The (originary) peoples understand that nature, with its rivers and forests, with its entire biodiversity, is the true infrastructure<sup>64</sup> required for the edification of human life.

It is not for nothing that indigenous territories present a larger pre-

60 Founding member of the International Task Force for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (GTI-PIACI).

61 Current executive officer of the Maíra Institute and indigenist with the Arara people of the Cachoeira Seca IL.

62 In Brazil, the government adopts the following nomenclature: Povos Indígenas Isolados e de Recente Contato (Isolated and Recently Contacted Indigenous Peoples) (PIIRC). In South America, Spanish-speaking countries use the expression Pueblos Indígenas en Situación de Aislamiento y Contacto Inicial (PIACI).

63 According to data from the FUNAI, there are 114 records of isolated indigenous peoples; out of this total, only 24 are confirmed, the others being in the information and/or study phase. As for the number of records of Recently Contacted indigenous peoples, the data provided by the FUNAI varies between 8 and 10 records, or indicates that the entity provides assistance to 19 indigenous lands in which these peoples are present. A survey by Antenor Vaz indicates that there are 25 indigenous groups in Brazil that can be considered within the recently contacted group.

64 “Evolving in the last fifty million years, the Amazon forest is the largest technological hub the world has ever known; each of its organisms, trillions of them, are a wonder of miniaturization and automation” (Antonio Donato Nobre, “O Futuro Climático da Amazônia: Relatório de Avaliação Científica” (The climate future of the Amazon: scientific assessment report, in a free translation). Sponsored by ARA, CCST-INPE, e INPA [2014]).



served biodiversity than other territories on the planet. The indigenous peoples know, better than anyone else, the importance of each animal, insect, plant, or mineral for the sustaining of human life.

The extremely rich biodiversity of the Amazon, for instance, is not a given or *a priori* fact, but rather the result of millennia of action by the originary peoples, who, based on their traditional wisdom, gradually shaped and perfected forests, rivers, and nature. In the cosmovision of the originary peoples, humans are not at a level above all other material or immaterial beings.

On the other hand, frenzied consumerism caused by the capitalist promulgation worldwide has shown itself to be increasingly uncontrollable and insatiable. As such, the violent imposition of this exclusionary way of life threatens the future of all mankind. According to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at the United Nations, published in 2022,<sup>65</sup> we must urgently and radically change our way of life. If this social way of life does not drastically change, socio-environmental catastrophes will become more frequent and intense. In other words, the loss of biodiversity and the climate crises caused by capitalism are jeopardizing the future of mankind as a whole.

Therefore, there is no doubt that we should protect, preserve, and promote the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples if we are to strengthen our biodiversity, ascend to climate justice and, thus, secure a dignified future for the coming generations. The cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples may play a role as the main form and practical reference for the construction of a new social way of life and for a new world.

In the case of indigenous peoples under voluntary isolation and initial contact, the situation acquires new particularities that merit our attention. The ecosystem-level services provided by these groups' territorial management benefit mankind as a whole. Their presence and traditional knowledge promote a healthier and more balanced world for all. However, the Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (PIACI, in the Spanish-language acronym) are directly threatened by an agriculture-extraction-export development model, whether legal or illegal, in most cases implementing infrastructure projects without any respect towards local particularities and the national or international legal system.

Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact have human rights and are subjected to a series of vulnerabilities. Defending the rights of these peoples involves engaging other entities in addition to the indigenous peoples. Government bodies, international entities,

65 “Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change”. IPCC. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>. Accessed on: 25/03/2023.

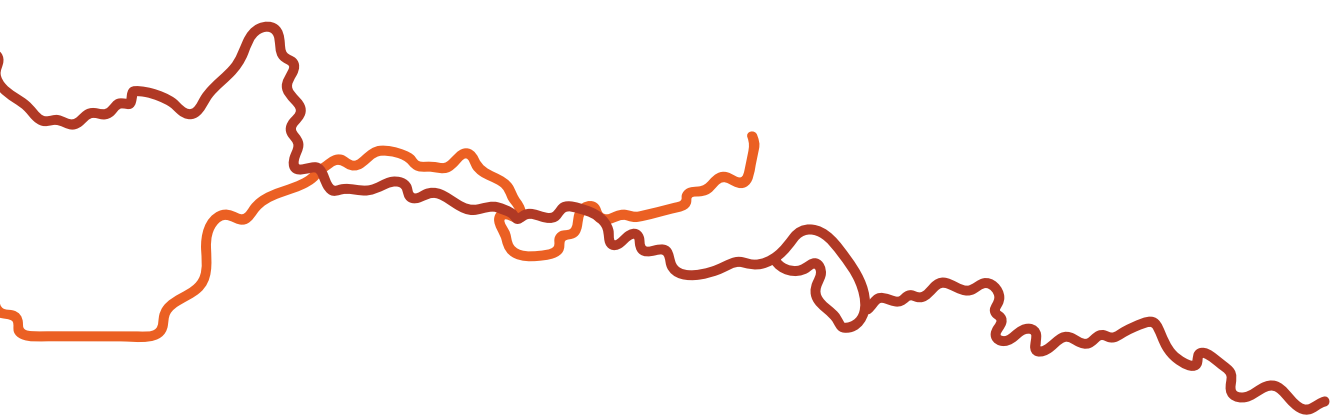
members of civil society and other actors in the defense of socio-environmental rights must cooperate in the preparation of public policies that protect the rights of these peoples, such as the recognition of their territories.

In spite of the setbacks witnessed in the last four years, there has been progress in the last three decades when it comes to the protection and promotion of the rights of isolated indigenous peoples in Brazil. In fact, there is a whole set of administrative procedures that secure the protection of these peoples. However, this existing “regulatory framework” is still fragile, since it encompasses administrative measures without the approval of Congress, which means they can be revoked by the managers of administrative entities with jurisdiction over these matters.

In reference to those indigenous peoples considered as recently contacted, the situation is more concerning, for there are very few administrative measures that regulate the promotion and protection of these peoples. In this sense, they lack a specific public policy.

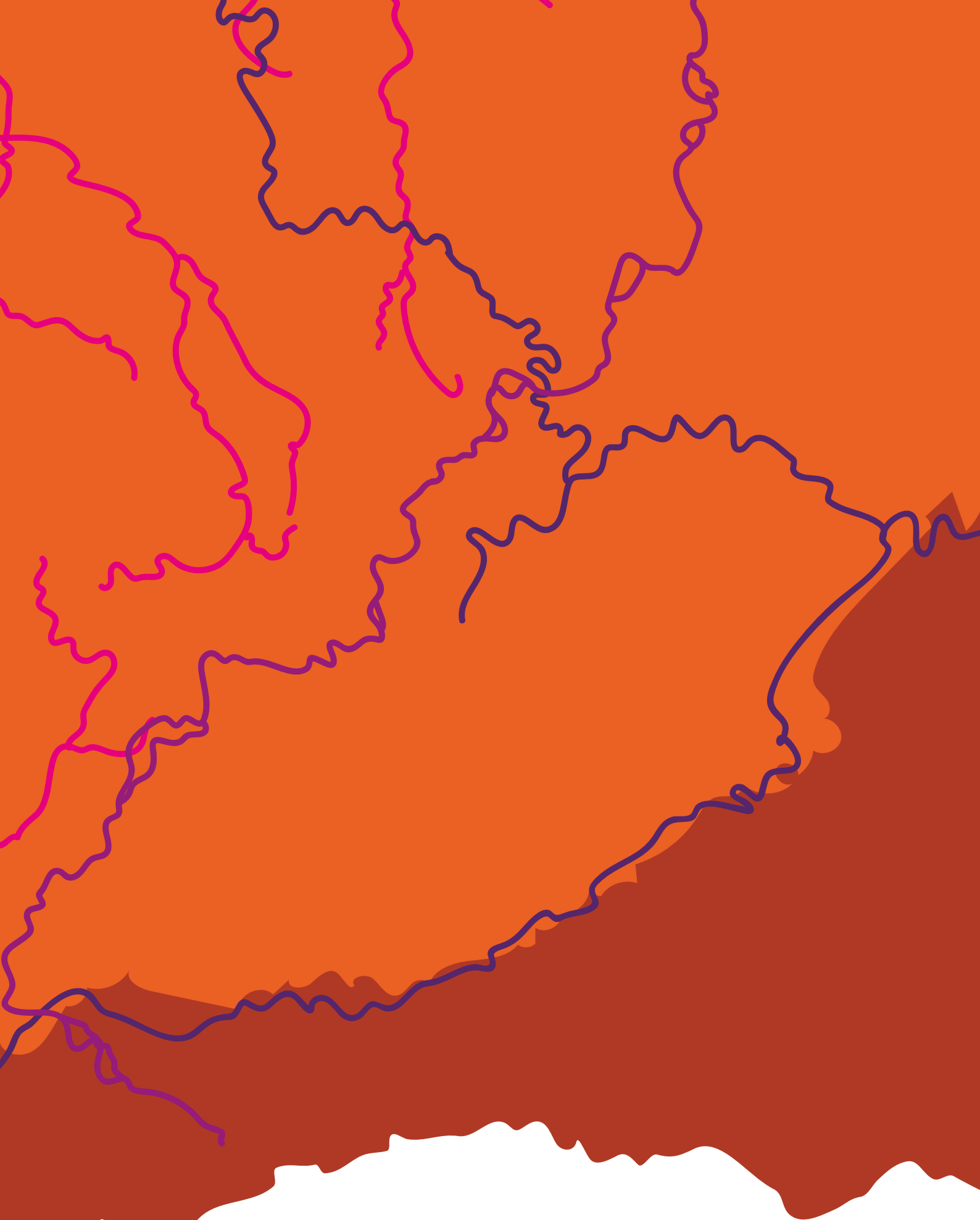
We may emphasize the initiative of the Ministry of Health and the FUNAI, as of the publication, in December 2018, of Joint Ordinance no. 4,094, of December 20, 2018, which “Defines principles, guidelines and strategies for the healthcare of Isolated and Recently Contacted Indigenous Peoples”. We may also highlight the publication of Resolution No. 44, of December 10, 2020, by the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), which “establishes principles, guidelines, and recommendations to secure the human rights of isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples, as well as protecting the life and well-being of these peoples”.

The PIACI certainly has the best technological solutions to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis. However, as previously stated, the change in consumerist society must be urgent, radical, and universal. As such, a major commitment must be established with the PIACI for the protection and promotion of their rights, particularly when it comes to the recognition of their territories and the delineation of effective public policies to maintain biodiversity and access climate justice. The future of all mankind depends on the diversity of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples – however, we are all tasked with putting this knowledge into practice.









Support:

