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**ORAL SUBMISSION TO THE 1987 SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS.**

**Submission made by Survival International, non-governmental
organisation in consultative status with the United Nations.**

BRAZIL: INDIAN LAND RIGHTS IN CRISIS

In the two years since the last meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations the critical situation of the Indians in Brazil has deteriorated badly. At the same time as promoting several massive development programmes in Amazonia, the Government has put still further obstacles in the way of the already painfully slow and ineffective process of demarcating Indian lands.

The official Indian Agency, FUNAI, has manifestly failed in its statutory duty of demarcating all Indian lands by the end of 1978. Today, two thirds of the country's Indian lands are still awaiting that legal protection.

The most substantial threat to Indian survival in Brazilian Amazonia comes from a major programme of military occupation, colonisation and development which is about to affect the lives of up to 60,000 Indians from 83 Indian territories. The programme devised by the National Security Council stretches the entire length of Brazil's northern frontier. According to the plan, demarcation of Indian lands within a 150 kilometre wide corridor along the frontier is to be prohibited.

The ban on land demarcation, together with a series of Special Community Development Projects to be administered by the government Indian agency (FUNAI), will ensure that Indian lands are effectively 'freed' for the large-scale mechanised exploitation of mineral resources, while the Indians are incorporated as manpower on newly created 'farming colonies'.

Among the peoples affected by this new policy are the Yanomami. The question of the Yanomami's land rights has repeatedly been brought to the attention of the Working Group in previous years. In January 1987 President Sarney stated that he was

prepared, at last, to decree the creation of the long-awaited Yanomami Indian Park. However, hopes raised by the President's statement, were dashed in March this year when the head of the National Security Council, General Bayma Denys, 'clarified' the President's original statement by indicating that only the territory **outside** the newly created 150 km frontier security zone would be classified as Indian territory. The remaining two thirds of the Yanomami lands, where most of the Indian population and the richest mineral resources are located, will be designated a 'National Forest'.

The Government's reluctance to demarcate Indian lands is not limited to the northern border. Similar problems face over 6,000 Indians in the south-western Amazonian state of Acre and neighbouring Amazonas, whose lands are threatened by the extension of the BR-364 highway with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. In spite of agreements made between the Bank and the Brazilian Government to demarcate Indian lands before the road was completed, the Government is now blocking the demarcation process.

In June 1987, the US Senate called on the Bank to suspend all further disbursements of its loan until these outstanding problems had been resolved.

In eastern Amazonia 13,000 Indians are threatened by the **Grande Carajas Programme** a major development scheme covering an area the size of Britain and France combined. Indian lands have been taken over by highways, railroads, dams, mines and invaded by squatters and gold panners. Massive deforestation for cattle-ranching and to provide fuel for charcoal burning iron smelters menaces the area with ecological ruin. While all this 'development' goes ahead, little has been done to protect the Indian communities. Although large sums have been spent on a Support Programme for the Indians, virtually no money was set aside for the fundamental question of securing the Indians' lands, with the result that 16 out of the 27 Indian territories still lack the necessary legal protection. Despite these deficiencies, the Support Programme ended in June this year, while the development has centuries to run.

All over Brazilian Amazonia, it is the same tale. The interests of the Indian peoples are being given second place in programmes of national development and national integration.

Survival International calls on the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to seek clarification from the Brazilian government on its plans to demarcate the lands of the Indian communities of the country and to call for guarantees that neither the Calha Norte nor any other plans for the region will be allowed to supercede the nationally and internationally recognized legal and human rights of the Indian peoples of Brazil.