

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Sixth Session. May 14 - 25, 2007

Agenda Item: Urban indigenous peoples and Migrants

Mrs. President,

I am from the National Guarani Commission of Brazil, YVY-Rupa. I want to say that it wasn't us who migrated to the cities, but the cities that came to us. This situation has been imposed on us for the past 507 years of colonization. Once again, land is the issue at stake.

The land rights situation of the Guarani - of the Kaiowa, Mbya and Nhandeva/Xiripa - is one of the most critical in Brazil, in terms of guaranteeing the territorial rights of indigenous peoples. Despite the fact that the Guarani are one of the largest indigenous populations in the country, numbering some 45 thousand people, we have the smallest number of recognized lands, and we're in constant conflict with landowners and government organs. Of the few Guarani lands that are officially recognized, the majority are extremely small, and communities are asking for them to be enlarged.

The omission of the Brazilian government in defending traditional Guarani lands and territories has victimized a large part of the Guarani population. The lack of political will on the part of the Brazilian state in demarcating Guarani lands has forced communities to live in precarious conditions, often on the side of roads or in cities, or in areas that are too small and don't have the natural resources needed for their survival or for their traditional practices, causing hunger and dependence on state handouts.

Without security in their villages, the Guarani live in constant tension, and are exposed to various forms of violence, and vulnerable to legal threats against their communities and the leaders who fight for their lands. There are also continual problems with alcoholism, prostitution, assassinations, suicides, and child deaths from malnutrition.

The sad reality of the Guarani is a direct result of the lack of government land policies, and the lack of political will of the Brazilian state in demarcating their traditional lands. This is a clear violation of the rights

enshrined in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 and of ILO Convention 169, which Brazil has signed.

1. We THEREFORE RECOMMEND that this Forum notes in its report that in Brazil the Guarani people are threatened because their traditional lands are not recognized, and because off their lands (in urban areas or alongside roads, for example), there are no public policies or actions to guarantee their human rights. The situation continues to get worse over time, and Brazil should act swiftly to officially recognize Guarani lands.
2. That in its report the Forum recommends to international agencies participating as observers, that Brazil should comply with its constitutional duties with regard to the demarcation of Guarani traditional lands, and with its international obligations, in particular ILO Convention 169.

Thank you.