

Input from Conselho Indigenista Missionário
Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Isolated (Free) Indigenous Peoples in the Context of Mobility

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Conselho Indigenista Missionário - CIMI, through its isolated indigenous People team, is pleased to present its contribution to the Report on Mobile Indigenous Peoples, while also stating its deepest concerns with the future of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation in Brazil.

While mobility manifests itself in a variety of ways in Indigenous Peoples' cultures and ways of living, it is important to emphasize just how important it is as a framework to understand the threats regarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples in voluntary isolation, in particular. Indeed, not only isolated peoples retain nomadic or mobile lifestyles, neither are all isolated peoples inherently nomadic. Yet, their very own condition of isolation brings to the fore the need for special attention and care.

Undoubtedly, modern States' borders represent a true mobility challenge imposed on peoples living in and transiting across such areas (let alone on groups who are not only unaware of the existence of such States) and who are unfamiliar with the modern concepts of States, borders and nations. Especially concerning are the borders of Nations which have strained diplomatic relations between them, or that have deep distinct Indigenous Rights and Environmental legislation. In Brazil, a good portion of reports of Isolated Indigenous groups are in areas near international borders, particularly in the Amazon, and, commonly, this scenario overlaps with resource-driven territorial conflicts involving criminal loggers, hunters and miners, that thrive in the dubious jurisdiction and lack of surveillance of the far border areas.

In Brazil, the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI) currently has references to 114 potential cases of peoples or segments of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation (CIMI registers 177). Nonetheless, FUNAI confirms the existence of only 28 such groups. Therefore, there are more than 80 potential references of isolated groups that live under a permanent threat from loggers, hunters, fisheries, and illegal miners, as there are no protective measures taken by the Brazilian State over their territories.

It has become clear that most if not all isolated Indigenous Peoples are not ignorant of the surrounding society, but rather their isolation is mostly a reaction to that very knowledge. The histories told by recently contacted groups agree on this matter. The voluntary characteristic of

this isolation is itself deeply rooted and maintained in the practice of mobility towards the inner, most isolated parts of a group's territory, either by a voluntary avoidance migration or through a more violent-driven fugue: in any way, the process results in inevitable losses of territory and mobility freedom.

Such is the ongoing case in the Karipuna Indigenous land: in the period from October 2022 to June 2023, Karipuna leaders brought forth information about the presence of an isolated group within their territory, at great proximity where illegal loggers were invading their lands, on the area of the Formoso River.

Another similar case is the Juma people, a reported isolated group that possibly resides in the region of a massacre of the Juma people that happened in 1964, in the Central Amazon, presumed to be survivors of the tragedy. They are considered non-confirmed by FUNAI and there are no protective measures to guarantee their integrity taken by the Government, even though there is strong evidence of their existence. The project of paving the BR-319 Highway, which connects the cities of Manaus and Porto Velho, under heavy criticism for its links with deforestation, would directly affect the area where this group is presumed to inhabit.

In the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau indigenous land, where there are at least three isolated groups, criminal deforestation is on the rise. In the northern part of the territory, fifteen thousand acres of forest have been cut down and occupied by invaders. Clandestine roads give access to big clearances in the jungle, used for grazing cattle. Recently, it was reported that two workers were building a barn in the proximity of the São Miguel River when indigenous men came about, "adorned at the waist but otherwise naked, holding large bows and arrows".

Last year, in Rondônia, the death of the last indigenous man of the Indigenous Land Tanaru marked the end of yet another Indigenous People, a reminder of the history of extinction that reaches recent days, in which several groups were massacred or decimated by infectious diseases due to the inactivity of the State, that pleads ignorance of the existence of these people. The Piripkura, reduced to three people in Mato Grosso, are yet another group fated to disappear. Invisible, without qualified information on the potential risks they face, many other groups could soon share their fate.

The situation has deteriorated in the past five years, four of which were under the radical right administration of former president Bolsonaro. CIMI has monitored the governmental actions in monitoring and fighting invasions on territories with reported isolated groups and found that those actions fall short of guaranteeing security for those people. State mechanisms of territorial protection were completely dismantled during Jair Bolsonaro's administration along with verbal stimulus to invaders of those territories by the president himself.

As big-scale infrastructure projects advance country-wide, territorial surveillance and protection dwindle, and state recognition fails, CIMI fears Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation will face increasing pressure on their territory and freedom, especially regarding the ability to maintain mobile practices, with a high risk of undermining their Human Rights of self-determination.

Recommendations

To interrupt the continued vicious process, some recommendations to the Special Rapporteur, to propose to States, are hereby drawn:

- Increase the operational capacity State organs, bases of protection and other monitoring resources related to the constant territorial surveillance;
- Enactment of laws and regulations to strengthen the legal protection, based on existing evidence of potential isolated groups, as means of preemptive measure *before* the confirmation of the existence of such groups;
- Adoption of special measures in the healthcare with surrounding populations in these territories;
- The support of autonomous initiatives of territorial protection adopted by the Indigenous Peoples towards the protection of isolated groups;
- The creation, at the administrative level, of instruments for participation of the affected peoples and communities, including the issue of international borders and the guarantee of their fundamental rights.