



Sentinel Project Primary Correspondent Monthly Report

SOUTH AMERICA: Indigenous people – Report August/September/October, 2008

Brazil

- August, 25th: Brazil received the visit of James Anaya, U.N. Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights. Mr. Anaya expressed his concern about the situation of indigenous groups in Brazil and affirmed that these groups should be given more control over their communities and land and that the government should devote more resources to them and not only act according to “paternalistic politics”, since indigenous groups are being threatened by large landowners and agribusiness.

Source:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN25454677>

- August, 27th: Brazil's supreme court had to decide whether or not to annul the indigenous reservation Raposa Serra do Sol, located in the Brazilian state of Roraima (in the country's northeast, bordering Venezuela and Guyana) and inhabited by 17000 indians. The demarcation is being questioned by the government of Roraima state and landowners as well as forestry and mining companies that claim that the reservation is blocking economic development in the region. The indigenous groups that inhabit the reservation complain that the reservation and its population are violently targeted by those farmers. In spite of the conflicts that were taking place since April, the court decided to delay the ruling after one judge (among eleven), Mr. Carlos Alberto Menezes Direito asked for more time to analyze the case.

Despite the delay, the president of the Supreme Court, Gilmar Mendes, declared on Oct, 13th that the ruling is going to happen before the end of the year.

Sources:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSN2750535120080827>

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/08/09/brazil-on-the-verge-of-a-civil-war-over-indigenous-land/>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/brasil/ult96u455442.shtml>

- September, 27th: Politicians and landowners from the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul have launched a media campaign against the Guarani Kaiowá people and their land rights. In order to raise anti-indigenous feeling in the region, the anti-indigenous sector claims that Guarani Kaiowá people want to occupy the whole state of Mato Grosso do Sul.

Source:

<http://www.cimi.org.br/?system=news&action=read&id=3457&eid=275>

- Oct, 30: Members of the Tupinambá community of Serra do Padeiro, state of Bahia, affirm that they are being constantly threatened and attacked by the Brazilian Federal Police. According to an official letter written by the community, the Brazilian Federal Police invaded their land, attacked their members, including children, threw tear gas bombs, destroyed houses and robbed food and instruments in order to enforce three arrest mandates and also mandates regarding the reintegration of property. The Brazilian Association of Anthropologists also confirmed that the Brazilian Federal Police used disproportionate violence against the indigenous people from Bahia.



Source:

<http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia.asp?lang=PT&cod=35788>

PERU

- Oct, 17: In Peru, members of one of the last uncontacted indigenous groups are being pushed into Brazilian borders due to irregular logging activities. A member of FUNAI (The Brazilian government's Indigenous affairs agency) told Reuters and Folha de São Paulo newspapers that loggers are destructing group's land and also probably killing some of their members and forcing others to flee. The Peruvian Indigenous Agency says that there are no proofs regarding the existence of isolated indigenous populations inside Peru, but Beatriz Huertas, a member of the international indigenous rights group CIPIACI (Committee for the Protection of peoples in Isolation and in Initial Contact of the Amazon, The Gran Chaco and Paraguay's Oriental Region), confirms that irregular logging has caused conflicts between the indigenous communities over resources, pushing isolated groups that live in Peruvian territory into Brazil.

Sources:

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/brasil/ult96u450869.shtml>

<http://www.cipiaci.org/noti1.htm#7>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN16380503>

- Indigenous groups have been making demonstrations against the Peruvian government since October 20th. The Aymaras and Quéchuas are demonstrating against mining and oil activities that endanger their lands. Indigenous organizations from Peru affirm that the Peruvian government is granting permission for these activities to take place inside indigenous territories with the purpose of weakening the rights of indigenous peoples in the country.

Sources:

<http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia.asp?lang=PT&cod=35662>

Colombia

- Sept, 30: an indigenous leader, Raul Mendoza, governor of Peñón, from the municipality of Sotará, was murdered after receiving constant threats for his involvement in the process of recovering territories for the Nasa community, some of these threats coming directly from the Colombian president, Álvaro Uribe.

Sources:

<http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia.asp?lang=PT&cod=35298>

http://ajpl.nu/radio/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1130&Itemid=1

- Oct, 14: The Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organizations (ACIO) alerted the international community that Colombian State is responsible for an “indigenous genocide”. It alleged that an “indiscriminate repression” has already killed 19 indigenous in 15 days. The Colombian National Indigenous Organization is articulating a pacific popular movement to call attention to the violation of indigenous rights in the country. The organization accuses the government of responding violently to indigenous claims. It also affirms that the government is not protecting those groups from the violent actions of paramilitary groups. According to the ACIO, the Uribe government acts systematically in order to criminalize indigenous claims through violent incursions, labeling the indigenous leaders as terrorists and using detention, torture, murder and forced displacement.

According to the ACIO, these government crimes were proved by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) in a judgment on “Indigenous Genocide” that took place in the Kankuamo community during 18-19 July, 2008. The PPT decided to accuse the Colombian State and the Uribe government of severely violating collective and individual rights of Colombian indigenous peoples, implementing annihilation, genocide, ethnocide and displacement of indigenous groups. The ACIO says that those violations are implemented to attend the interests of multinational corporations.

Source:

<http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia.asp?lang=PT&cod=35504>

- Oct, 21: Indigenous groups from Colombia are marching and demonstrating against President Alvaro Uribe. Their intention is to try to talk to Uribe about their lands right, protection against violence, investments in health and education for them and also to press the government to reject the U.S. free trade agreement.

During those demonstrations that are lasting more than a week, 2 indigenous people have been murdered. After being severely pressed, Uribe admitted that the police fired on the group, but did not kill them. The protesters affirm that the victims were murdered by the police.

According to the website of the Brazilian newspaper, Folha de São Paulo, the march began with 8000 indians and five days later the number increased to 20.000. The protesters are expecting even more participants to join them during the 100 Km march that is called “March for the Dignity of the Peoples”

The protesters affirm that since Uribe became president in 2002 more than 1253 indigenous people were murdered and almost 54000 were compelled to leave their original regions. Indigenous activists in the country are worried with the possibility that some of the groups might disappear (eighteen of them have only 200 members and 10 of the tribes have only about 100 members).

Sources:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN23464560>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE49M12D20081023>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/mundo/ult94u459182.shtml>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/mundo/ult94u459341.shtml>

- Oct, 21: a group of the Baro indigenous people crossed the Amazon forest and arrived in Leticia, a city on the Colombian side of the Amazon river. The group was scared because they have been attacked by irregular armed groups. After arriving in Leticia, the group is still having problems because the local authorities refuse to register them since they have no identity card, which is common among indigenous groups, and makes them more vulnerable during these kinds of displacement.

The members of the Baro people that are arriving in Leticia have high risks of becoming victims of human trafficking, child exploitation and prostitution, according to UNHCR. Besides that, those groups, after losing their land are also losing their cultural identities. The Baro are one of the smallest indigenous people in Colombia (700 members) which puts them in risk of extinction.

Source:

<http://www.acnur.org/t3/portugues/noticias/noticia/indigenas-colombianos-buscam-seguranca-em-povoado-da-amazonia/>

Venezuela

- Oct, 7: Members of the Yanomami group claim that they are being neglected by President Chavez's government. They affirm that many members are dying because of lack of medicines and health care. According to them, more than 50 people have died since President Chavez decided to expel American missionaries from the Venezuelan Amazon in 2005. The Yanomami are concerned because of a mysterious disease that killed 38 Warao Indians last August. The government says that the Yanomami are exaggerating and using this as a strategy to decrease the state authority in Amazon region.

Sources:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/07/world/americas/07venez.html?_r=1&sq=Yanomami&st=cse&oref=slogin&scp=2&pagewanted=all

<http://merciogomes.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2008-10-15T10%3A57%3A00-03%3A00>

Paraguay

Sept, 2008- Sept, 2008- Satellite Pictures taken on September, 2008 indicate that Brazilian logging corporations, such as Yaguarete Pora S.A. and River Plate SA., are destructing indigenous lands and violating indigenous rights in Paraguay. According to the CIPIACI (Committee for the Protection of peoples in Isolation and in Initial Contact of the Amazon, The Gran Chaco and Paraguay's Oriental Region), website, the situation is of great concern, since it affects indigenous lands belonging to the Totobiegosode, the most isolated sub-group of the Ayoreo group.

Source:

<http://www.cipiacy.org/campal.htm>

Analysis

The news of August, September and October, 2008, show us that indigenous peoples face existential threats all over Latin America. In Brazil, the main situation of concern is in the Raposa Serra do Sol reservation which, we hope, is going to be decided before next January. But it will take more than a legal decision to guarantee the rights of those indigenous people. If the Brazilian Supreme Court decides that the reservation should be maintained, the Brazilian government will have to remove the farmers from those lands and also guarantee that they will not come back to threaten the safety of the indigenous people.

Overall, I would highlight Colombia as the major situation of concern. All the murders, the judgment of the PPT and the march that is still happening show us that the Uribe government seems to be acting quite violently against Colombian indigenous peoples, some of them under imminent threat of extinction.