



## **Sentinel Project Primary Correspondent Monthly Report**

**Date of submission: 31 January 2009**

**Reporting period: 16 December 2008 – 31 January 2009**

**Area-of-responsibility: South America**

### **By country**

#### **1) BRAZIL**

**Area-of-responsibility:** Brazil

**Regions-of-interest:** Brazilian States of Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Roraima.

**Situation-of-concern:** Indigenous peoples' survival and living conditions

### **Report Summary**

On 4 December 2009, Enawene Nawe indians were attacked by dam workers in the state of Mato Grosso because they were fishing without permission near a dam building. According to the Survival International (SI) website, "the workers made the four Indians, two adults and two children, lie on the ground. They then threatened them, beat them with sticks and forced guns into their mouths." The company employing the dam workers denies that they acted aggressively, even though the police were called to release the group.

Survival International's website also warned that Guarani children are dying of starvation and malnutrition in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. The organization reports that "in the last five years alone, 80 Guarani children have died of malnutrition in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul." According to SI, Guarani children are suffering from starvation because the group was originally expelled from their lands by cattle ranchers in 1972 and since then "they depend solely on the government's food aid program".

In January, another case of violence against indigenous people was reported by S.I. in the state of Roraima. This time an illegal miner murdered a Yekuana man that refused to take a group of miners into the Yanomami indigenous reserve. The case demonstrates how illegal miners are a constant threat to this indigenous group. The

Yanomami Indians have been publicly denouncing the presence of illegal miners in their lands for more than a year, but “the authorities have done nothing to remove them”.

In January, CIMI (Indianist Missionary Council, in English) reported that at least 53 Indians were murdered in Brazil during 2008. Even though in 2007 there was a higher rate of murder (92 Indians), the organization is specifically worried about the high violence rates in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS). Out of the 53 Indians murdered in 2008, 40 of them belonged to the Guarani Kaiowá community that live in MS. Suicide rates were also rose in 2008. According to the organization, 34 Guarani Kaiowá committed suicide in 2008 (compared to 22 cases registered in 2007).

The lands of the Guarani Kaiowá are not legally recognized by the government and the Indians are confined to very small territories. This confinement and the lack of land to cultivate lead to a high incidence of depression and suicide, especially among the young population (between the ages of 15-22).

**Item#1 - article, “Dam workers attack Enawene Nawe Indians”, 16 December 2008**  
*<http://www.survival-international.org/news/4036>*

The article from the S.I. website describes the attack against the Enawene Nawe Indians. The article highlights that “over 70 dams are to be built on the River Juruena, which flows through the Enawene Nawe’s land. The dams will pollute the water and stop the fish reaching their spawning grounds. Fish are crucial to the Enawene Nawe’s diet as they do not eat red meat. Fish also play a vital part in the tribe’s rituals.”

**Item#2 - article, “Guarani child dies of starvation”, 19 December 2008**  
*<http://www.survival-international.org/news/4050>*

This article from the S.I. website reports the starvation death of an 18-month old Guarani girl. The website affirms that “in the last five years alone, 80 Guarani children have died of malnutrition in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul.”

**Item#3 - article, “Illegal miners murder Yekuana Indian”, 27 January 2008**  
*<http://www.survival-international.org/news/4133>*

The article describes the murderer of a Yekuana Indian by an illegal gold miner and highlights that:

“The Yekuana live in Uaicás, a large community in the north of Yanomami territory, and in several communities just outside the reserve... The Yanomami have been publicly denouncing the presence of illegal miners in their land for at least a year, but the authorities have done nothing to remove them...”

“The Yanomami and Yekuana are only now recovering from the massive gold rush of the 1980s which decimated their population through violence and disease. After many years of pressure from the Indians and their supporters, the governments of Brazil and Venezuela finally recognized Yanomami land in 1992. This latest tragic incident is a clear sign that invasions are on the increase and that illegal mining activity is gaining pace once again.”

**Item 4 - article, “53 indígenas foram assassinados em 2008”, 13 January 2009**  
*<http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia.asp?lang=PT&cod=36828>*

**Item 5 - article, Segundo Cimi, maioria dos índios assassinados em 2008 vivia em Mato Grosso do Sul, 14 January 2009**  
*<http://www.agenciabrasil.gov.br/noticias/2009/01/14/materia.2009-01-14.8882403537/view>*

**Item 6 - article, Cresce suicídio entre indígenas, mostra relatório do Cimi, 13 January 2009**  
*<http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/0,,MUL954173-5601,00-CRESCE+SUICIDIO+ENTRE+INDIGENAS+MOSTRA+RELATORIO+DO+CIMI.html>*

These articles report the rates of violence against indigenous people released by CIMI in January. They also highlight the specific situation of the Guarani Kaiowá people in Mato Grosso do Sul, as mentioned above.

## **2) BOLIVIA**

**Area-of-responsibility:** Bolivia

**Region-of-interest:** Porvenir, Department of Pando

**Situation-of-concern:** Violence in Bolivia perpetrated by paramilitaries against defenseless indigenous and peasant farmers.

**Report Summary:**

On 11 September 2008 in the northern department of Pando, at least 18 people - mainly indigenous and peasant farmers - were killed. They were on their way to a pro-government meeting when they were ambushed by a group of anti-government protesters that arrived in official vehicles belonging to opposition authorities.

The governor, Leopoldo Fernández, refuted all the accusations against him and even said that what happened in Pando was an armed confrontation between two groups “started” by the Government. Roberto Tito, a farmer who was in the place when the shooting started, said: “*We were unarmed. We were stopped at seven kilometers near to Porvenir, after that, they attacked us, when we advanced near to the bridge we were ambushed and shoot with machine guns*” (ElMundo, 2008).

Back in September 2006, the then Government Minister, Alicia Muñoz, denounced Leopoldo Fernández for training a group of paramilitaries in Cobija composed of former policemen and delinquents to act as a force called “citizens security.” Although Fernández rejected this allegation, Muñoz provided evidence such as photos and video recordings. Additionally, Alberto Murakami, chief of the “citizens security” group admitted to the training. Muñoz made this information public and based on this evidence it can be concluded that what happened in Porvenir was really a massacre perpetrated by well-trained paramilitaries.

The Bolivian army arrested Fernández under the charge of being responsible for a massacre and, apparently, he did not react. On 24 September, Judge William Davila said that Leopoldo Fernández acknowledged having sent armed people to stop a farmers’ demonstration that ultimately became a massacre. Davila also reported that, based on this confession and the information presented by district attorneys and the prosecutor in the case, he took the preventive measure of transferring Fernandez to San Pedro penitentiary. The order came shortly after the Supreme Court ordered him moved to a prison in the opposition-friendly region of Sucre. The move to Sucre was seen as a step towards releasing the governor as a show of reconciliation towards the opposition. This was seen as unacceptable since Fernández was accused of committing a massacre against defenseless people in Porvenir.

As of October 2008, Fernández was in detention facing charges of terrorism, murder, and criminal association for his alleged responsibility for the Pando killings. A multiparty congressional committee was investigating the incidents in parallel with prosecutors from the Attorney General's Office. The main suspect, Leopoldo Fernández, is still in jail.

**Item# 1, article, “En seis meses recolectarán las pruebas de la masacre de Pando”, January 20, 2009**

[http://abi.bo/index.php?i=noticias\\_texto\\_paleta&j=20090120202828&k=](http://abi.bo/index.php?i=noticias_texto_paleta&j=20090120202828&k=)

Mary Carrasco, the lawyer of victims of Pando’s massacre, declared that the hearings were not yet scheduled but now it is time to gather all the necessary evidence to support the case. This process will take approximately six months.

**Background Information – Sources:**

**Item #1, article, “UNASUR: "Hubo masacre en Bolivia", December 3, 2008**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin\\_america/newsid\\_7763000/7763930.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_7763000/7763930.stm)

**Item #2, article, “En Pando se entrenan paramilitares, denuncia el gobierno”, September 21, 2008**

<http://www.bolpress.com/art.php?Cod=2006092123>

**Item #3, Paramilitares emboscaron a campesinos y Fernández mintió sobre la masacre, September 12, 2008**

[http://abi.bo/index.php?i=noticias\\_texto&j=20080912122133lx](http://abi.bo/index.php?i=noticias_texto&j=20080912122133lx)

**Item #4, Bolivia Governor Admits Complicity, September 24, 2008**

<http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:GWXv53Yp99IJ:www.plenglish.com.mx/article.asp%3FID%3D%257B84924DEB-5458-42AD-A18B-64B5F5563546%257D%26language%3DEN+Bolivian+Governor%27s+Admitted+Complicity&hl=pt-BR&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=br>

**3) PERU**

**Area-of-responsibility:** Peru

**Region-of-interest:** Part of the Peruvian Amazon inhabited by uncontacted Indians

**Situation-of-concern:** Indigenous people’s survival threatened by an Anglo-French oil company

**Report Summary:**

An Anglo-French oil company, Perenco, hoping to drill for oil on uncontacted tribes’ lands acquired the rights to carry on its project. Despite all the evidence that uncontacted Indians lived there, Perenco made plans to send more than 1 000 workers to a remote part of the Peruvian Amazon. The idea of Perenco’s presence was not

welcomed from local indigenous organizations since it was seen as a violation of the indigenous rights and a threat to their lives.

Facing fierce criticism, the company denied the existence of uncontacted tribes in the area. However, it was not possible to continue saying that tribes did not live there because there is photographic evidence that uncontacted tribes really do exist. When questioned about this issue, the Minister of the Environment, Antonio Brack, said that companies could not enter uncontacted Indians' reserves. Mr Brack said that "*Where it has been demonstrated that there are uncontacted tribes, the state has created reserves which companies cannot enter and which amount to almost five million hectares*" (Survival, 2009). What the Minister did not know was that Peruvian law allows exploration in uncontacted tribe's reserves and that this is why the government gave permission for Perenco to exploit the area.

The main issue at this moment is that the international community opposes Perenco's work in uncontacted tribes' lands. It is clear that the presence of hundreds of workers in the territory of isolated Indians is potentially harmful. As a result of criticism and after the recent fall in global prices, the Peruvian Government is threatening to withdraw investment in the project.

**Item #1, article, "British company poised to send hundreds of workers into uncontacted tribes' territory", January 7, 2009**

<http://www.survival-international.org/news/4067>

This article highlights that an Anglo-French oil company, Perenco, has just been given the go-ahead from the Peruvian government to drill for oil in a remote part of the Peruvian Amazon. Perenco denies the existence of uncontacted tribes in the area despite confirmation of their existence by the Peruvian and Ecuadorian governments, the company that used to work in the area (Barrett Resources), and Peru's indigenous organizations.

**Item #2, article, "Minister is 'completely mistaken' about uncontacted tribes", January 14, 2009**

<http://www.survival-international.org/news/4084>

Several erroneous comments were made by the Minister of Environment, Antonio Brack, on RPP Radio's website when he claimed that companies cannot enter uncontacted Indians' reserves. According to this article, this is untrue because the Brazilian company Petrobras has signed a contract to work in the Murunahua Reserve,

and a consortium led by Pluspetrol work in the Kugapakori-Nahua Reserve. Mr Brack's comments were made in response to the news that the Anglo-French company Perenco have plans to work in reserves inhabited by uncontacted tribes.

**Item#3, article, "Anglo-French oil company faces billion dollar headache in Amazon", January, 26 2009**

<http://www.survival-international.org/news/4125>

This article emphasizes that the company Perenco may be forced to abandon the project after the government threatened to withdraw investment in it. The company's plans have already met resistance from local indigenous organizations because contact between outsiders and uncontacted tribes is a source of potentially fatal diseases.

#### **4) VENEZUELA**

**Area-of-responsibility:** Venezuela

**Region-of-interest:** Northwestern Zulia state

**Situation-of-concern:** Indigenous communities complain that Colombian rebels are living on or near Indigenous' lands with the tacit approval of President Hugo Chavez.

**Report Summary:**

Indigenous groups claim that members of the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) live openly on or near several Indian reservations in northwestern Venezuela. Indian leaders say that Chavez is aware of their presence and even tolerates it, which is corrupting indigenous cultures with arms, drugs, and foreign values. Community leaders say that rebels are killing those who do not cooperate and taking control of their lands by squatting and by marrying indigenous women.

**Item# 1, article, "Venezuela tolerates FARC rebels in border region, residents say", January 21, 2009**

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-venezuela-farc21-2009jan21,0,2521564.story>

This article from the LA Times explores the fact that members of Colombia's largest rebel group, known as the FARC, are living close to indigenous lands and, as a result, are encroaching on their towns, taking their land and supplies, and eroding their culture.

## 5) CHILE

**Area-of-responsibility:** Chile

**Region-of-interest:** Tirúa and Ercilla

**Situation-of-concern:** Mapuche Indigenous minors were threatened by the police.

### **Report Summary:**

In the indigenous community of Mapuche, uniformed police officers - known as *Carabineros* - often use excessive force during their operations. The abuses typically occur when police intervene to control Mapuche protests and prevent land occupations, or when they enter communities in pursuit of Mapuches suspected of crimes (such as theft, damage to property, and arson) allegedly committed during ongoing land disputes with farmers and logging companies. The Carabineros recently threatened four children in the community of Esteban Yevilao. A seven-year-old girl also seems to have been poisoned by tear gas fired by the police into her house. Events like these seem to be increasing in indigenous communities like Mapuche and the excessive use of force contradicts the role of the police, which is to protect and not to harass or mistreat locals.

**Item #1, article, Preocupa la seguridad de menores Mapuche, December 17, 2009**  
[http://www.cl.amnesty.org/index\\_noticias.shtml?sh\\_itm=86d36d03cb110746f48e6c6535cf906b](http://www.cl.amnesty.org/index_noticias.shtml?sh_itm=86d36d03cb110746f48e6c6535cf906b)

This article from Amnistía Internacional (the Chilean branch of Amnesty International) highlights the new wave of political violence perpetrated against indigenous Mapuche minors, particularly from the Esteban Yevilao and José Guiñón' communities. It calls attention to human rights violations and emphasizes that the Chilean Government must take appropriate measures to stop the excessive use of violence by the police.

## **6) COLOMBIA**

**Area-of-responsibility:** Colombia

**Region-of-interest:** La Guajira

**Situation-of-concern:** Indigenous face threats and forced displacement.

### **Report Summary:**

The Wayuu who live in the Colombian department of La Guajira are being targeted by groups of armed men who have threatened to kill them and burn their houses. Indigenous peoples living in La Guajira have been the victims of selective killings, extortion, intimidation, death threats, and forced displacement. Many Wayuu have crossed the border to seek refuge in Venezuela.

The Wayuu, alongside the Arhuaco, Kogui, and Wivam, constitute 45% of the population of the La Guajira department. They are one of the largest indigenous groups in the region, with a total of 150 000 individuals in Colombia and 160 000 in Venezuela. There are 80 different indigenous groups in Colombia with a total of 1 million indigenous citizens out of a population of 45 million Colombians. Out of the 80 groups, 27 have fewer than 500 individuals and are threatened by extinction due to forced displacement and violence.

The department of La Guajira is located in a strategic region of Colombia with access to the Caribbean Sea, and various armed groups involved in drug trafficking desire control of the region.

**Item #1, article, ACNUR pide a Colombia que proteja a los indígenas que son víctimas de ataques , January 27, 2009.**

*<http://www.ultimahora.com/notas/191344-ACNUR-pide-a-Colombia-que-proteja-a-los-ind%C3%ADgenas-que-son-v%C3%ADctimas-de-ataques>*

This article from the Paraguayan newspaper Ultima Hora reports that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has requested the Colombian government to protect its indigenous populations that inhabit the Colombian department of La Guajira.

**Item #2, article, Colombia: growing UN concern as more indigenous flee violence,  
January 27, 2009.**

*<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29676&Cr=Colombia&Cr1=>*

This article by the official United Nations news service reports on the situation in La Guajira and describes the coordinated efforts of UNHCR's offices in Colombia and Venezuela regarding the forced displacement of indigenous populations between the borders of the two countries.