



# INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL

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Written Statement submitted by the International  
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Concerning the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, the International Indian Treaty Council would like to commend Mr. Francesco Capotorti for his excellent study on this subject.

We also take this opportunity to commend and support the Draft Resolution submitted by Yugoslavia (E/CN4/L1367/Rev. 1), especially articles 1, 2, and 3, and point 2 of article 4.

However, we respectfully point out to the members of the Commission on Human Rights that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas have a specific history and a specific political and economic situation. We are peoples who have been invaded and colonized by Europeans. The fundamental struggle and the fundamental right of the American Indian people in every country in the Americas (with the sole exception of Uruguay, which has killed all of its Indigenous peoples) is the right to an adequate land base. That right must include the right of economic, political and cultural self-determination and development. In some cases, such as Peru and Bolivia, the Indigenous peoples are a very large majority of the population, and not a minority. Yet the historical facts of even these cases have created a situation that demands international protection of the rights of these Indigenous peoples.

We do not, however, believe that it is constructive to consider the rights of all "indigenous peoples" of the world as a general category separate from historical and geographic realities, although we are anxious to see the report concerning indigenous populations which the Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has been ~~preparing~~ *PREPARING* for several years.

We call to the attention of the 35th session the situation of American Indians in Brazil, as an example of the need for international protection for the rights of American Indians as minorities with special rights. Their situation is urgent in the extreme, and they have attempted time after time to negotiate reasonably with the government of Brazil, which continues a policy of genocide against them.

During this session the delegate of Brazil has spoken admirably about the necessity of placing "man at the center" of all plans for development and about the right of self-determination. He has also spoken of the human rights of sufficient food, clean water and air, and even the right to sufficient sleep.

Yet one must assume, from its laws and its practices, that Brazil does not consider its American Indian minority as a part of that Mankind deserving of these rights. It would seem that Brazil considers its Indians as "savages" or "primitive" people whose rights and whose lives can be trampled in the name of development.

Certainly, we applaud those legitimate efforts of the people and government of Brazil to develop the resources of the country for the benefit of the people. But the development in the Amazon area is in most cases beneficial only to multi-national corporations and to certain wealthy individuals, such as Daniel Ludvig.

The extent of the planned Amazon development has dire implications for the Indigenous people. In the past, periods of economic boom in the area have been accompanied by massive Indian extermination. Since the arrival of the Portuguese four centuries ago, the Indigenous people have been regarded as either slave labour or savages that must be pacified or killed.

The Indigenous population has experienced steady decline. It is estimated that of 3 or 4 million in the mid-1500's, less than 100,000 have survived. Of the 200 Indian nations existing in 1900, 87 have been annihilated. Many are nearly extinct.

Today the invasion of the Amazon is gathering momentum. Corporate surveyors and mineral exploitation teams, mining crews and construction workers, cattle ranchers and land speculators, the kind of adventurers that 'frontier development' attracts and the government are arriving in hordes.

The Brazilian government has asserted that the "pacification" of the Indigenous population in the Amazon is crucial in order to create conditions acceptable to foreign investors for resource exploitation, and to large agriculture enterprises involved in ranching and cultivation. The former Minister of the Interior, Costa Cavalcanti has said the "Indians cannot hold up the road to progress."

Pacification is geared to the 'integration' of the Indigenous population into capitalist society.

Recently, exploitation of the Amazon areas has intensified, and with it has come a resurgence of the "settler mentality". Newspaper articles once again speak of the "pioneers" settling the Amazon.

This phenomenon has brought two particularly disturbing developments to the Brazilian Indians. The first is a new law called the Indian Emancipation Law. This law effectively obliterates the special status of the Indian people solely for the purpose of stealing their remaining land.

Although that special status did not benefit the Indians and was racist in concept and practice, it did afford some small protection of Indian lands.

The Emancipation Law has been condemned by FUNAI (the Bureau of Indian Affairs) itself, by the Church, by all of the leading anthropologists, and by the Indian leaders, all of which conveyed their objections to the Brazilian governments months before the law was enacted. D'arcy Ribeiro, the country's most eminent anthropologist, has said that the law was enacted partly because the Minister of the Interior, Rangel Reis, was personally involved in land speculations in the Indian areas.

Some thirty Indian leaders attempted to meet with government officials including the President and Rangel Reis, but were turned away because they were "not properly dressed".

The second disturbing development is the appointment early this year of a new president of FUNAI. This new president is the same man who was in charge of building the Trans-Amazon Highway for several years. During that time he was directly in charge of the oppression of Indians, and at this time he is in charge of protecting Indians.

The Indians people of Brazil, as other Indian people, have <sup>REASONABLE</sup> ~~some~~ demands and ~~some~~ needs. Primarily, they need a guaranteed land base that cannot be changed by arbitrary decisions of each new governmental administration. They need co-operation from the government, some political and economic control over their own land, and some technical and educational assistance. They also need the time and respect to develop at their own pace instead of being held back or destroyed.