

## Raposa Serra do Sol at the OAS

March 2, 2007, Washington, DC: the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States held a hearing yesterday on the human rights situation in Raposa Serra do Sol, Northern Brazil.

The hearing came as a response to a request from the Indigenous Council of Roraima, Rainforest Foundation, Forest Peoples Programme and the Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program of the University of Arizona. Representatives of these four organizations were at the hearing. On behalf of the Brazilian government, representatives of the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the meeting, though no government agencies responsible for security or the environment – critical issues in RSS – participated. Four of the seven expert commissioners were present, including the Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and the Rapporteur for Brazil.



On April 15, 2005, President Lula da Silva ratified Raposa Serra do Sol (RSS) after over thirty years of struggle. Although this was a significant victory, it was only the first step in ensuring the rights of the indigenous peoples of RSS. The organizations are therefore pursuing a petition, first submitted in 2004, before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The Commission is a body of the Organization of American States, composed of 7 independent experts; its mandate is to examine and monitor the measures taken by member States to implement the rights established by the Inter-American system.

The organizations put three main issues of concern before the Commission:

- \* **the failure of the Brazilian Government to remove all remaining non-indigenous occupants from RSS;**
- \* **violence against indigenous peoples in RSS and continued impunity; and**
- \* **interference in the social organization of indigenous communities.**

Of particular concern is a group of rice-growers who occupy traditional lands within RSS, causing environmental damage and threatening indigenous communities. They have refused to leave, and in fact talk openly about expanding their plantations. The situation has engendered an extremely tense situation in the area.



Of key importance, the Commission affirmed that the precautionary measures it issued in 2004 are still in force. The State therefore must continue to take all the necessary measures to: protect the life and physical integrity of the Ingaricó, Macuxi, Patamona, Taurepang and Wapichana indigenous peoples; complete investigations of all attacks against indigenous peoples and their property; and not restrict the free movement of indigenous communities in RSS. The Commission furthermore stated that it would continue paying close attention to the case, and suggested that the parties explore the possibility of a friendly settlement.

For more information:

[www.cir.org.br](http://www.cir.org.br)

[www.law.arizona.edu/Depts/iplp/](http://www.law.arizona.edu/Depts/iplp/)

[www.forestpeoples.org](http://www.forestpeoples.org)