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*Conselho Indígena de Roraima  
Rainforest Foundation US*

*Forest Peoples Programme  
Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy Program,  
the University of Arizona*

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## **Press Release**

### **United Nations committee asks Brazil to explain allegations of escalating violence and hatred towards indigenous peoples**

**October 10, 2006. Boa Vista, Brazil --** As incumbent President da Silva approaches run-off elections at the end of this month, he will have to answer not only to allegations of corruption, but also targeted questions presented by the international community regarding his administration's treatment of indigenous peoples and his government's compliance with its human rights obligations under international law.

The United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recently received reports that the Ingaricó, Macuxi, Patamona, Taurepang and Wapichana peoples living in the indigenous reserve of Raposa Serra do Sol "are being exposed to violent attacks on their person, property and institutions and that there is a pattern of escalating racial hatred and violence towards them." Using special procedures reserved for urgent matters, CERD sent a letter to the Government of Brazil asking that it respond to the allegations, on an expedited basis, and detail the measures being taken to protect the indigenous peoples of the area, including the extent to which those responsible for "acts of violence [have] been prosecuted and punished." CERD also asked the Government for information on the steps it has taken to implement the decree signed by President Lula da Silva on 15 April 2005 that calls for the titling of Raposa and the removal of non-indigenous settlers no later than 15 April 2006.

"CERD has used its urgent action procedures to call upon Brazil to report earlier than planned, as Brazil was not scheduled to submit any information to the Committee until January of 2008," stated Joênia Batista Carvalho, General Counsel of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR). "This demonstrates the Committee's serious concern for the safety of the indigenous peoples of Roraima and its awareness that Brazil appears to be in violation of its international obligations."

In its letter to the Government, CERD noted that it was particularly concerned about information that the Surumu Center for Training and Culture (a former mission) was burned, villages and food supplies destroyed, indigenous families left homeless, bridges burned, and people threatened, beaten, kidnapped and shot by non-indigenous settlers. The letter further states that

“[a]ccording to the information received, the hatred and violence has also been supported by some local government and law enforcement officials.”

“President da Silva’s response to the serious threats faced by the indigenous communities in Roraima will define the legacy of his administration as it relates to the protection of indigenous peoples and their lands,” stated Marinaldo Justino Trajano, General Coordinator of CIR. “Immediate action is needed to save the lives and lands of our people and will influence indigenous support for Lula in the run-off elections.”

Last year thousands of indigenous peoples in Brazil and their supporters celebrated President Lula da Silva’s signature of a decree ratifying the demarcation of Raposa Serra do Sol. Ratification of the decree was the result of decades of pressure by local indigenous communities, which culminated in indigenous leaders asking the Indigenous Council of Roraima and Rainforest Foundation-US to file a claim before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Brazil’s failure to implement its own decree (particularly the removal and compensation of non-indigenous settlers) has denied indigenous peoples the rights to their land, territories and resources and has created a situation of legal uncertainty and tension in the area. The Government’s sluggish progress is partly explained by the resistance of many non-indigenous settlers, mostly of rice-growers, supported by powerful local politicians, economic entrepreneurs and even some judicial authorities.

In June 2006, CIR -- with support from the Rainforest Foundation US, the Forest Peoples Programme and the Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program at the University of Arizona -- informed CERD about the worsening situation in Raposa and asked the Committee to review the situation on an urgent basis. In early 2007, the Committee is expected to make additional recommendations based on its findings.

CERD is a UN body of independent experts that monitors the compliance of states that are party to the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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***For a copy of the CERD letter to the Government of Brazil and the original submission to CERD, see:*** [http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/s\\_c\\_america/bases/brazil.shtml](http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/s_c_america/bases/brazil.shtml) or [www.cir.org.br](http://www.cir.org.br)

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