

DECLARATION FROM THE RESISTANCE ASSEMBLY AT WARO APOMPU VILLAGE

December 18, 2020

The Resistance Assembly of the Munduruku People was held from December 15th through 18th, 2020 in Waro Apompu village located on the Cururu River in the Upper Tapajós River region within the Munduruku Indigenous Territory and Sai Cinza Indigenous Territory. It was attended by more than 200 participants from 47 Munduruku villages, representing the Upper, Middle, and Lower Tapajós and the Lower Teles Pires. 45 chiefs participated, including the head chief, the chief of the warriors Bruno Kaba, and the following Munduruku organizations: the Ipereğ Ayũ Movement, Da'Uk Association, Wayxaximã Association, Arikico Association, Wakoborun Association of Munduruku Women, Upper Tapajós Indigenous Council (CIMAT), and the Pariri Indigenous Association.

We met despite the ongoing pandemic, due to the threat of steadily increasing projects of death in our territories. Who will defend us if not ourselves? Our territory is suffering the consequences of the invasion of loggers and miners, our people are in poor health, and our culture and social customs are in danger.

In the Middle Tapajós basin, there has been a rise in the number of barges loaded with soy, gas, and petroleum; grain port projects on the river (transshipment stations); the so-called Ferrogrão grain railway project; the advance of illegal logging operations and palm harvesters; a growing number of gold dredges [that scour and mine the riverbed]. Corporations such as Anglo American and financial institutions such as BlackRock are sponsoring this destruction. The politicians of this region don't respect us: not the Itaituba Mayor Valmir Climaco, City Councillors Wesley Thomas and Manoel Dentista, Federal Deputy Joaquim Passarinho, Senator Zequinha Marinho, neither the biggest seller of backhoe loaders Roberto Katsuda, nor Portela and Brandão who claim to represent Indigenous peoples. These people don't represent us!

In the Upper Tapajós Munduruku Indigenous Territory and Sai Cinza Indigenous Territory, deforestation rose 177 percent in 2019 compared to 2018, due to the rise in illegal gold mining in the region. Mining operations have continued, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 the region had the largest number of malaria cases, a consequence of illegal mining, and now many of our relatives are sick. Even though this mining is illegal it is supported and promoted by the Federal Government. With the arrival of Environmental Minister Ricardo Salles, they made use of a small group of Indigenous peoples to lie, claiming that all Indigenous peoples support illegal mining.

In the lower Teles Pires, our sacred sites have already been destroyed through the construction of the Teles Pires, São Manoel, Sinop, and Colíder hydroelectric dams, and there are studies

underway for the construction of yet another hydroelectric plant, at the Rasteira waterfall. Our people who live there face the possible shrinking of the Kayabi Indigenous Land; we do not accept negotiations involving our lands. If the “time frame” [an arbitrary date on which Indigenous groups had to physically occupy a traditional territory in order to lay legal claim to it] interpretation is taken into account, we could lose a large portion of the Kayabi Indigenous Territory. The Mato Grosso state government has a lawsuit before the Federal Supreme Court [demanding the reduction of 80 thousand hectares of this territory].

We are against the large hydroelectric projects that are planned for our region, and we are fighting for the government to take responsibility for those dams that are already built. We fear the federal government’s commitment to pursuing these projects and that they will come after our other rivers. There are dams planned for the Tapajós River include the following hydroelectric projects: São Luís do Tapajós, Chacorão, Krepoca, and Jatobá, in addition to hydroelectric dams on the Jamanxim and Juruena Rivers.

The ‘Pariwat’ [white people] continue bringing us all their evils and projects of death. The Federal Government is anti-Indigenous. Our associations are playing the roles of the National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI), Indigenous Health Agency (SESAI), and that of the politicians who should be advocating for and defending us. We demand an investigation of FUNAI employees who are linked to mining lobbyists. We also denounce the lawyer Grécia Leite who collaborated with illegal meddling in our associations. Grécia Leite does not represent us!

Illegal mining affects everything in our territory, from the Middle and Upper Tapajós to the Lower Teles Pires, our rivers are contaminated. The health of our people is in danger. The team at Brazil’s Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) discovered a high level of mercury in the villages in the Middle Tapajós during recent research studies. Six out of every ten people demonstrated abnormally high levels. This heavy metal is a neurotoxin that makes fetuses and infants especially vulnerable to mercury exposure. We are ingesting up to 18 times more than the safety limit. In addition, illegal mines expose our people to increased consumption of drugs, alcoholism, prostitution, and sexually transmitted diseases.

This would be made worse by the approval of the ‘Death Bill’ or Proposed Law (PL) 191/2020, which would open Indigenous Territories to industrial activities, such as mining. We, the majority of the Munduruku people, are against this law. We want our territory free from mining and all activities that cause destruction, environmental and social impacts — all of which are detrimental to the way of life of Indigenous peoples. We have requested that we be consulted and that is not being respected. Large companies such as Vale are buying the subsoil under our lands, claiming that it is state land and that they have the right to negotiate and prospect for minerals in the future. This is one more example of why they want PL 191 to be approved.

We do not accept the creation of the “Munduruku agribusiness cooperative” at Karapanatuba village in December 2020, by a small group of Indigenous people. We are Munduruku and not prospectors. We do not need gold mining to live — we have our organizations that work for life and not for death. Compliance with these requests is urgent as there are chiefs who are under threat, such as Chief Osvaldo Waro of PV village on Das Tropas river. There are constant threats of new wildcat gold miner invasions at Cururu River, the only waterway where miners are not yet present.

We demand that the Federal Police, and responsible government bodies, implement all measures necessary to remove invaders from our lands, establishing fixed bases on all rivers, and to stop acting inconsistently.

We demand the demarcation of Sawré Muybu and Sawré Bapin territories, demarcation of the Teles Pires Indigenous Land and of Apiaká do Pontal and Isolados, as well the registration of the Kayabi Indigenous Land.

We demand legal protection and recognition of our sacred places, in order to respect our culture and our ancestors.

We demand compensation for the destruction caused to our territories retroactive until present day.

We demand that the Brazilian State comply with Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) Resolution 94/2020, of December 11th, 2020, calling for precautionary measures, in favor of the Munduruku people. In addition, we ask that the UN and IACHR demand that the Brazilian government take the necessary steps to remove all types of invaders from our Indigenous lands.

We own the land, history tells that we, the Munduruku people, came from this land and we are not afraid to defend it. We wish to leave our children and grandchildren the life our ancestors gave to us.