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GREENPEACE

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KENNEDY
HUMAN
RIGHTS

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Honorable Climate Envoy John Kerry:

As organizations with decades of in-field partnerships with Indigenous Peoples in Brazil and the Amazon region, we write to you regarding the escalating violence being perpetrated against leaders and organizations of the Munduruku people. In the strongest possible terms, we urge you and other representatives of the Biden Administration to publicly denounce this week's violent attacks incited by proprietors of illegal gold mining operations inside Munduruku indigenous territories, and to support the Munduruku's call for Federal Police intervention in line with a recent Brazilian Supreme Court order. We also urge you to call for immediate and effective protection for the numerous threatened Munduruku leaders, their families and communities.

We appreciate your familiarity and support for the Munduruku people as expressed in the keynote address for the 2020 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award to Alessandra Korap Munduruku. At the award ceremony you underscored Indigenous peoples in general as sources of environmental wisdom and recognized the Munduruku people in particular for actively resisting "the constant, violent, illegal, and sometimes state-sponsored push by loggers and miners to exploit their land." We applaud your statement in support of the Munduruku people, expressing your determination to "... continue to be part of this great battle. I look forward to fighting alongside [Alessandra and other indigenous leaders]."

In the spirit of your appreciation of the Munduruku struggle and your commitment to stand with them into the future, we urge you to publicly denounce the violence and stand with Indigenous Peoples of Brazil and the Amazon.

Over the last two years, the actions and rhetoric of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro have notoriously catalyzed elevated levels of invasions into Indigenous Peoples' lands led by proprietors of illegal wildcat gold mining operations (garimpos), landgrabbers, and loggers. In this context, the violence towards the Munduruku escalated in recent months, including the ransacking of the Wakoborun Munduruku Women's Association office on March 25th of this year. This dangerous situation is not a secret: two months ago twelve U.S. Representatives wrote to the U.S. Ambassador to Brazil Todd Chapman about

the intensifying threats, encouraging diplomatic action. To date, the letter has not received a response from the Ambassador. We have seen no public statements from the U.S. government about the Munduruku situation or others, like the assault on Yanomami territory.

This Wednesday, the situation deteriorated. The home of Maria Leusa Kabá -- a Munduruku leader and coordinator of the Wakoburūn Munduruku Women's Association -- was burned down in retaliation for her leading role in Munduruku calls for Federal Police action to evict destructive illegal gold mining operations from their territory. The home of another leader, Ademir Kaba Munduruku, was threatened this week as well. We are extremely concerned about the security of Maria Leusa, Alessandra, and many other leaders. Our concerns are echoed by statements issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights - which released precautionary measures in favor of the Munduruku this past December - and Human Rights Watch.

Reports indicate that details of the planned Federal Police raid were leaked to the proprietors of illegal mining operations by high-level political figures within the Bolsonaro administration. Not only did the proprietors have advance notice, but the Brazilian Ministry of Defense withdrew its previously agreed support for the operation, five days prior to the enforcement operation, claiming a lack of resources. The support from the Ministry of Defense would have provided longer term security for the Munduruku leaders in the aftermath of the raid, in anticipation of the retaliation that unfolded this week.

These incidents occur as the Brazilian Congress is expediting a suite of bills that together would preempt demarcation of Indigenous Peoples' territories, enable politicians to redraw boundaries of Indigenous Territories, backslide and exempt environmental licensing requirements for industrial activities in the Amazon. The suite of bills would legalize hydroelectric dams and destructive mining activities on indigenous lands, legitimize land grabbing and grant amnesty to illegal deforestation by land grabbers. Of equal importance, it would withdraw Brazil's adherence to International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention n. 169, that recognizes the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples with regard to policies and projects that directly affect their territories and livelihoods.

Working to end the immediate threat of violence is the first step. Further actions should include an immediate response to the back-sliding on environmental and human rights legislation. This includes examining the implications for addressing the climate crisis in the Amazon. An in-depth criminal investigation into the supply chains that allow for illegal exploitation of gold and timber on indigenous lands of the Amazon, and their export to the United States, Europe and other countries. This investigation should include the role of the Brazilian Central Bank and other federal agencies in failing to exercise effective monitoring and control over illegal supply chains.

We implore the Biden Administration to prioritize the human rights protection of communities and leaders within its strategies related to protection of the Amazon biome writ large. They are often the last lines of defense and without them, the Amazon will be irrevocably lost.