

LETTER FROM THE GUARANI KAIOWÁ COMMUNITY OF APY
KA'Y, DOURADOS, MATO GROSSO DO SUL TO ALL THE
AUTHORITIES IN BRAZIL

We the Guarani Kaiowá community of Apy Ka'y *tekoha* [traditional Guarani territory] in Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul state in Brazil, wish to tell everybody that on 15 September 2013 we decided to reoccupy part of our traditional land where there is a well of good water and a bit of remaining forest.

We decided to return to the land where three of our children, who were run over and torn apart by vehicles belonging to the ranches, are buried; where two leaders who were assassinated by gunmen employed by the ranchers, and where a 70 year old shaman who died from inhaling pesticides sprayed from a crop-spraying plane, are also buried.

This is the fourth time we have returned to our land. We buried all these dead relatives in our land, Apy Ka'y. We have waited for more than two decades for the demarcation and ratification of our land, but this never happens. We were expelled three times from our lands in a 15 year period. Each time we returned to occupy our land, we suffered three violent evictions and much aggression at the hands of the ranchers. So for this reason we came to live on the side of the highway where we lived for 14 years.

After the first eviction, our leader was murdered by the ranchers. We buried our leader here on our traditional land. Recently the burial place of our leader was destroyed by a tractor working for the ethanol factory [where sugar cane is distilled into ethanol]. The cemetery was fenced in by the tractor. São Fernando ethanol factory is planting sugar cane on top of indigenous graves. All our ancestors' burial grounds were

enclosed by the factory's tractors.

We were condemned to die on the roadside where there is no drinking water, nor one bit of land to plant corn, potatoes and manioc. So our children went hungry and suffered great hardship every day. We came to beg in the city streets of Dourados, asking for leftovers. We spent 14 years like this.

Last month our huts were all burned down. The alcohol factory and the ranch's gunmen would not let us collect fresh water from the well. We only drank dirty water.

We have waited for 14 years for the government of Brazil to demarcate our land. For 14 years we have suffered humiliation, intimidation, hardship and hunger because we were evicted by the ranchers. In 14 years six of our people suffered violent deaths.

Faced with the threat of death, the loss of our relatives and so much suffering and pain, we decided for the fourth time to reoccupy our land, Apy Ka'y, on 15 September 2013.

We have decided to fight and die for our land. We are here with children, women and old people. From very early on, on 16 September 2013, we started to drink water from the well, and we felt the air from what remains of the forest. It's very good! We returned to and are staying very near the burial grounds of our grandparents and our children who died, cut into pieces by vehicles.

As everybody knows, we are being threatened with death, and our lives are at imminent risk. Just today, 16 September, we suffered three death threats and one eviction threat. The gunmen are closing in and encircling us, and a bus brought in various armed men to attack us. A group of men threw a liquid

poison into the water. The gunmen promise that they are going to attack, and evict us from here. A lawyer from the ethanol factory spoke with us and warned us that they have a court order to evict us.

We Guarani Kaiowá know that we may be attacked at any moment by the ranchers' gunmen, or the courts may be used against us.

We say to everyone that we have decided to resist here, by the stream and the forest edge, on our reoccupied land of Apy Ka'y.

Tekoha Apy Ka'y, 16 September 2013