

YANOMAMI TIMELINE

1940 - 1960s

First sustained contact with outsiders as Brazil's Indian Protection Service sets up posts in the area, and Catholic and Protestant missionaries establish a presence. Yanomami suffer first epidemics of flu, measles and whooping cough.

1968

Dr Kenneth Taylor, later to become director of Survival International (USA) starts field work with Yanomami (Sanuma group). He later co-authors the first detailed proposal for a Yanomami Park and presents it to the Brazilian government. It is ignored.

1973 - 1976

Brazil's military government starts to build the northern perimeter highway, penetrating deep into Yanomami land. The results are catastrophic: two Yanomami communities in the path of the road are almost wiped out from diseases introduced by construction workers. Yanomami in this region suffer a severe population drop. The partially built highway is abandoned in 1976.

1974

Survival begins to fund health care programme with Yanomami in Venezuela.

1975

First invasions by miners searching for tin ore.

1978

Brazilian government proposes to split Yanomami area into 21 separate pockets of land; the plan would mean the destruction of the Yanomami if approved. Under pressure from NGOs supporting the Indians, the plan is shelved.

CCPY (Pro Yanomami Commission) founded in Brazil to defend Yanomami land rights.

1978-1979

Agricultural projects draw in colonists who settle near Yanomami land.

1979

Survival publishes first of many urgent action bulletins asking its supporters to lobby the Brazilian government for Yanomami land rights. CCPY puts forward new proposal for Yanomami Park.

1980s

News of mining potential in Yanomami land spreads. Invasions increase.

1980

For first time Survival, with two other organisations, makes a formal complaint against the Brazilian government to the Organisation of American States (OAS). In 1985, the OAS condemns the government and urges it to create a Yanomami Park.

1982

Survival presents the Yanomami case to the UN for the first time.

1984

Survival, through its French section, assists in funding Médecins du Monde in a CCPY vaccination campaign. This continues until the teams are expelled by the government in 1985-87.

1985

First military base built in Yanomami territory. Other bases follow. These create tensions with local Yanomami communities as soldiers prostitute Yanomami women and spread venereal diseases.

1986

New gold rush begins in earnest.

1987- 1990

An estimated 40,000 gold miners are by now working illegally inside Yanomami territory, spreading malaria and flu to which the Yanomami have no resistance. Up to 90 illegal landing strips are constructed. Use of mercury to separate gold poisons many rivers and fish which the Yanomami drink and eat.

1987 - 1993

It is estimated that 20% of the Yanomami die from respiratory infections, malnutrition and malaria introduced by the goldminers.

1988

Government decrees that Yanomami land will be divided into 19 separate pockets of land, an almost exact re-run of the 1978 proposal. Seventy per cent of the Indians' land would be excluded. In response, Survival co-ordinates demonstrations at Brazilian embassies in 20 countries. These are widely televised in Brazil. Vigils continue for the next three years.

1989

Survival is awarded the Right Livelihood Award (the 'Alternative Nobel Prize) and invites Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa to Britain and Sweden to accept the award on its behalf. This is the first time a Yanomami

spokesman has left Brazil. The trip generates huge media and public interest.

At the request of the Yanomami, Survival opens an emergency medical aid fund to support CCPY's urgent health care project. For several critical months it is the only funding available for the project.

1990

Government proposes three 'mining areas' in Yanomami territory which would allow miners to work there legally. The plan is later shelved.

1990s

Under mounting national and international pressure at what Prince Charles calls 'a dreadful pattern of collective genocide', the Brazilian government makes several attempts to expel the illegal miners, but many return clandestinely.

1991

President Collor announces the government will demarcate all Yanomami land (9.6 million hectares).

1992

Yanomami territory demarcated just before Brazil hosts the UN's first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. At over 9.6 million hectares it is the largest single indigenous territory in Brazil. Together with the area inhabited by the Yanomami in Venezuela, it is the largest indigenous territory in tropical rainforest anywhere in the world.

1993

Sixteen Yanomami (mainly old people and children) are massacred in the community of Haximú by goldminers. 22 goldminers are arrested.

1995

At the request of Davi Yanomami, CCPY starts a bilingual

educational project with Yanomami communities, supported by Survival. Its aim is to help Yanomami defend their rights themselves.

1996

Five goldminers convicted of the crime of genocide and given sentences of between 19 and 20 years for the Haximú massacre.

1999

Urihi, an NGO formed by members of CCPY, created to provide health care to the Yanomami. Yanomami are trained as health workers. Rates of malaria fall due to permanent presence of health teams in the area.

2000

Brazilian tribunal upholds right of appeal for miners convicted of genocide.

2003

Expansion of colonist settlements into Yanomami land. Their slash and burn techniques dry out the forest, causing devastating fires.

2004

Urihi closes as government takes over healthcare. Chaos ensues. Malaria spreads again

2004

Yanomami form their own organisation, *Hutukara*.

2006

Brazil's Supreme Courts upholds the ruling that five miners are guilty of genocide for the Haximu massacre.

2007

Indian leaders, including Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, speak out against proposal in Congress to open up indigenous territories to mining.

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Davi Kopenawa, Yanomami, Brazil

