

02/10/2019

Letter from the Munduruku Chiefs
Ajebuyxi gu ekawen tup: The Role of Our Chiefs

We of the Munduruku people are demonstrating against the blatant disrespect that is being shown to our leaders and to our people. Acting on lies, *pariwat* (white) goldminers and politicians are exploiting our home and our territory without consulting us.

We Munduruku are one nation, 14,000 people strong, and our territory is unique. Karosakaybu and our ancestors left this inheritance to us to care for, a place for us to live and raise our children. We do not support the laws and projects that threaten us.

Our fight is not a recent one; it is very old. We are tired of hearing the *pariwat* say that we are "incapable," and because of this we always show our strength. It is our ancestors who help us protect our territory.

We are here protesting and asking for help, because it is the politicians and councillors themselves who are killing us, who are polluting our rivers, who are talking to the federal government on behalf of our people. We reject the statements made by any municipal councilman about regularizing mining on our land, and also any statements regarding compensation owed to us for disturbing *Itin'a Wuy jugu* (funeral urns of the Munduruku people). No councilman is authorized to speak on behalf of the Munduruku.

We have our own Consultation Protocol (in keeping with ILO Convention 169) which states that consultation is required prior to the implementation of any plan that affects the lives of our people. Our chiefs, leaders, shamans, teachers, and even our children must be heard. We do not accept meetings in Brasilia only with *pariwat*. Any important decision has to be made within our territory.

Where are the laws in defense of the Munduruku people?

We do not negotiate the lives or the rights of our people. We demand respect. We do not want to repeat what happened during the most recent mayoral administration in Jacareacanga, during which we Munduruku rose to defend our rights and succeeded in reversing the dismissal of 70 Munduruku teachers.

Therefore, we are telling the population of Jacareacanga that it is our relatives who depend on the rivers, the fish, our gardens, and on hunting and the forest to live.

We are tired of being ignored. Tired of waiting for politicians to communicate with transparency. We know that the current government is threatening our rights, our territory, and our lives.

We call for an urgent hearing with the councillors of Jacareacanga mediated by the Federal Public Ministry (MPF), so they can hear what we have to say.

We will continue fighting in the defense of our rights and the lives of our people!

Jacareacanga, Pará, Brazil – October 2, 2019

Translated by Jeremy M. Campbell

Statement of the Munduruku People

We are against mining and prospecting on indigenous land.

Munudrukânia - Pará State, Brazil. September 27, 2019

The Brazilian government – or misgovernment – does not speak for the Munduruku people.

Bolsonaro, in his address to the United Nations, said that we indigenous people are "cavemen." He should know; he defines us using a word that describes him perfectly. Bolsonaro does not represent us and his words are empty. Our children have more wisdom than he does.

Today we gather as the chiefs, leaders, warriors, guardians, shamans, singers and teachers of our Munduruku people from the middle and high Tapajós River and from the lower Teles-Pires River. We have talked about the range of attacks and threats to indigenous peoples throughout Brazil, threats to our territories and our rights.

We come to speak, and we speak for ourselves.

We know that the “*daydu*” – the name we give to traitor politicians – are writing laws that seek to end the demarcation of indigenous lands. They want to open our lands for mineral exploration, hydroelectric dam construction, railroads, and industrial waterways.

They want to wipe out indigenous peoples by destroying our forests, our rivers, and our sacred sites. We are against mining and prospecting on indigenous land. Gold mining is dividing our people, introducing new diseases, and contaminating our people with mercury. Mining brings drugs, alcohol, weapons, and prostitution. And greed.

All of these dangers are felt by all indigenous peoples, as well as by traditional communities such as our neighbors in Montanha and Mangabal, and especially by us Munduruku people who have lived along and protected the rivers and forests of the Tapajós for hundreds of years. There is no way of reasoning with this destruction. We will not trade away our land, and we will prevent any organization that pursues our land from entering the Tapajós.

Some of our relatives, blinded by the sheen of gold, are playing dirty *daydu* games, and are claiming publically that the Munduruku people are in support of mining and prospecting. Let us repeat: your words are full of “*dapxim*” – full of hate and full of lies.

The Munduruku relatives sitting at tables in Brasilia with you are sick. They would let mining machines destroy our land. They do not represent us, nor are they the majority.

No municipal council-person represents the Munduruku people, because they are strangers to our traditional politics and social organization. They cannot speak of any sacred place, nor can they negotiate on behalf of the Munduruku people.

We are a nation of over 14,000 people, and we have our own associations which form the base of a resistance movement. We have a free and prior consultation protocol that must be respected by you as a law, and we retain veto rights.

No single law can determine how prior consultation will be achieved within each indigenous nation. ILO Convention 169 already exists to define what is free, prior and informed consultation, and our protocol exists to say how it should be done among our people. We are not being consulted about any of these laws and projects that you are envisioning for the Tapajós region, which is our home.

We have the autonomy to enjoy our own political and social organization, and to determine our own future, as you wrote in the 1988 Federal Constitution and in ILO Convention 169.

We are building our collective well-being guided by the wisdom of women – who are life-giving people – as well as the wisdom of our shamans and spirit guides, of our warriors, our leaders, and our children. We stand ready to tear up all these death-spreading laws and projects.

We want to warn you that we are a warrior people. We learned to wage war in the silences of dawn from the great warrior spirit Karodaybi, and so we are called fire ants by other peoples.

We are ready for the war that you are waging and we want to warn you that here in Mundurukânia, in territory occupied by our ancestors for centuries and throughout which we find footprints and traces of the great Karosakaybu and Muraycoko, no one will be allowed to come in to prospect, to destroy, or to transform everything into merchandise and money. It is past time for the Brazilian government to comply with the very laws you

have written yourself and to remove the invaders from our lands. We have been denouncing *pariwat* (white) loggers and prospectors for over 20 years, and we always have to act alone.

But we will not stop and we will not surrender. We have never lost a war and in the past we have cut off the heads of our enemies. Will we have to return to cutting off our enemies' heads? We know what we must do, and are guided by our traditional politics and social organization.

Movimento Munduruku Ipereg Ayu

Associação das Mulheres Munduruku Wakoborun

Associação Indígena Pariri (Médio Tapajós)

Associação Dace (Teles-Pires)

Associação Wuyxaximã

Associação Indígena Pusuru

Associação Kurupsare

CIMAT

Sawe!

Translated by Jeremy M. Campbell