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**We help tribal peoples defend
their lives, protect their lands and
determine their own futures.**

President Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

March 16, 2011

Dear Mr. President,

On the occasion of your forthcoming visit to Brazil, Survival International, a human rights organization which has been campaigning for tribal peoples' rights since 1969, would like to inform you that we are extremely concerned about the Guarani indigenous people who are seriously threatened by the sugarcane/ethanol industry.

Since the demand for ethanol in the United States of America is rising, and imports of ethanol from Brazil look set to increase greatly, we ask that you consider the information in this letter and discuss the Guarani situation with President Dilma Rousseff.

There are around 46,000 Guarani Indians living in Brazil, and like all indigenous peoples, they have a deep connection to and reliance on their land.

However, almost all of the Guarani's land has been stolen from them, to make way for ranches and soya and sugarcane plantations. This has left the Guarani in a desperate situation, with many living in overcrowded reserves or in make-shift camps on the side of the road, where suicide, alcoholism and malnutrition are rife.

The current boom in sugarcane and ethanol production in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, south of the Amazon, where a large proportion of the Guarani live, is worsening the tribe's situation and putting their future in jeopardy.

Sugarcane is being grown illegally on Guarani ancestral land, which the Brazilian government is legally obliged to map out and protect for the Indians' exclusive use. However faced with a strong political and economic anti-Indian lobby, the authorities have failed to recognize most Guarani's land rights.

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Founded 1969.
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The state government plans to build over 70 ethanol alcohol refineries, many of which will be on Guarani land. Sugarcane plantations are already taking over the Guarani's land, polluting their rivers, killing fish and causing diarrhoea amongst the Guarani, and exposing them to the smell of the *vinhoto* - the by-product of the sugarcane production - which is causing intense headaches and illness amongst the Indians.

Ambrósio Vilhalva, a Guarani Indian from one of the communities affected, told Survival, 'The sugar cane plantations are finishing off the Indians. Our lands are getting smaller and smaller. The plantations are killing the Indians.'

The Guarani frequently suffer violent attacks whenever they attempt to return to their ancestral territories. Their leaders are often targeted by gunmen and dozens have been assassinated. The tribe has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and babies are dying from malnutrition because the tribe has no land to cultivate or hunt on.

We attach Survival's report about the Guarani's situation, sent to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, last year.

Professor James Anaya, the UN Special Rapporteur on indigenous rights visited the Guarani and in his 2009 report on Brazil to the UN's Human Rights Council highlighted the plight of the Guarani: 'Tensions between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous occupants have been especially acute in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where indigenous peoples suffer from a severe lack of access to their traditional lands, extreme poverty and related social ills; giving rise to a pattern of violence that is marked by numerous murders of indigenous individuals as well as by criminal prosecution of indigenous individuals for acts of protest.'

Last year, Alternative Nobel Prize winner, Brazilian Bishop Dom Erwin, described the Guarani situation as a 'cruel genocide in progress' which the government is 'ignoring... before their eyes'.

Under the Brazilian Constitution and ILO Convention 169 on tribal and indigenous peoples' rights, which Brazil ratified in 2002, the Guarani have the right to occupy and use their lands.

In November 2007, Brazil's Ministry of Justice, Public Prosecutor's Office, Indian Affairs Agency (Fundação Nacional do Índio- FUNAI) and 23 indigenous leaders signed an agreement – the *Termo de Ajustamento de Conduta* (TAC), which obliges FUNAI to map out the Guarani lands, and to return them to the indigenous communities by April 2010. However, there have been severe delays in implementing this, and many Guarani communities continue to live in appalling conditions, away from their ancestral land.

Survival International urges you to discuss the Guarani situation with President Dilma Rousseff, and particularly the threat posed by the sugarcane, and to encourage her government to put a stop to the cultivation of sugarcane on Guarani land and to map out the Guarani's territories as a matter of urgency.

Fast action is required to prevent the Guarani's plight from worsening, and we feel that your meeting with President Dilma Rousseff presents an invaluable opportunity to spur movement to rectify the situation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Tess Thackara', with a stylized, flowing script.

Tess Thackara
Director
Survival International USA

cc: Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State
Mauro Vieira, Brazil Ambassador to the United States