

## 02/05/2011 – Esplanade of the Ministries in Brasilia - site of 8<sup>th</sup> Acampamento Terra Livre (ATL) of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil

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**What: Acampamento Terra Livre 2011**

**When: May 2-5 2011**

**Where : Esplanada dos Ministérios, Brasília, Federal District**

**Press Conference : dia 2 de maio, às 10hs na Tenda Principal/Plenário**

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*The largest annual mobilization of the indigenous movement, the encampment continues until Thursday, May 5, when a list of demands will be presented to the federal government*



Indigenous peoples from throughout Brazil occupy the Esplanade of the Ministries, in Brasilia, for the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the ATL (Free Land Encampment) 2011. During the event, organized by the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), tents for both housing and conferences are situated on the expansive grounds of the Esplanade.

Inaugurating the 8<sup>th</sup> session in the pre-dawn hours of Monday, May 2, and continuing until Thursday May 5, members of at least 70 peoples gather to demand that the federal government and particularly the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) respect indigenous rights.

Executive secretary of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), Eden Magalhães, stressed the support of the organization for the ATL as a unified space for the indigenous movement deeply concerned about the various forms of aggression against the territories of the communities.

"We believe that another world is possible with the indigenous peoples," Magalhães said. For him, large infrastructure projects and enterprises, such as the Belo Monte dam, in the state of Pará; the lack of demarcation of indigenous lands and the criminalization of the leaders are modes of alienating traditional and constitutional rights of the peoples.

The surrounding society increasingly views the construction of dams and the expansion of agribusiness as signs of national development. However, the indigenous peoples do not see it that way. "The construction of a hydroelectric plant puts everything around it under water. How can we live without our forests? An entire cycle of indigenous culture is there. From our ancestors to animals and natural remedies," said Kretã Kaingang.

### **Life under canvas**

The attack on the indigenous peoples affects communities throughout Brazil in a similar manner. Some situations, however, reveal the sheer scope of the official government indifference, above all that of the FUNAI. The Guarani of Rio Grande do Sul, [many displaced by the Itaipu dam, without sufficient land demarcated and confirmed, survive along the highways in shacks of canvas and black plastic. Nearly three thousand Guarani are scattered throughout the state. This situation also experienced by the Guarani of Mato Grosso do Sul.



Mauricio Guarani is one of the leaders of his people. He explains that some lands have been demarcated, "but are very small and our population has increased in these lands (...) my people also cannot grow food." Guarani life under canvas in the state is along the federal highways BR-101 BR-116 BR-290 and BR-040. The people survive without drinking water, medical assistance, food is scarce and they lack basic sanitation.

"The ATL is an important time to show all this to President Dilma (Roussef) and demand that our rights are respected. This is the cry of the Guarani and the peoples in the country," said Mauricio.

### **Belo Monte, Belo Death**

In Pará, the challenge to the people is to combat the construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric complex. Josinei Arara lives with her community along what is called the Big Bend of the Xingu. The project will destroy the village where he lives, as well as 29 others in the region. For him, the plant is going to destroy the forest and that will affect even the communities that will not be submerged by the reservoir.

"We do not want anything that would destroy our Amazon, our forest. We draw our culture from it. We must preserve it for our children and grandchildren. We will fight until the end," he stressed. Belo Monte is another issue on the list of demands on the ATL agenda. The plant became a symbol, right beside the arrests and murders of indigenous leaders. This is an indicator of how heavily the federal government tramples on the rights that are guaranteed by

law. FUNAI has come to forge consultation with the peoples for construction of the plant.

Josinei Arara reported on the threats suffered: "They say the village will be burned." All pressures suffered by the indigenous peoples, including from the Federal Police as in the Serra do Padeiro, in southern Bahia, where the Tupinambá people live has been escalating. In the ATL plenary, statements from various leaders corroborate the reports of murder, arrest warrants and death threats.



Neguinho Truká lives with his people in Pernambuco. The transposition of the São Francisco River is the infrastructure project that jeopardizes the Truká villages. "Since 2005 we have been fighting for the demarcation. With the transposition it is estimated that 385,000 hectares of the caatinga [biome] will be deforested," he says. Neguinho reports that a Brazilian Army base has been installed on the Truká land to intimidate his people.

Resistance to the attack on their rights remains the only recourse for the peoples. In wry resistance Isabel Apinajé, of Tocantins says, "The feds are us (indigenous peoples). But if the feds want to come and take us from the land, we have the bordunas (type of wooden stick) for them".

Event live on the Internet

<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/atlindigena>