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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

Multiple crises infringe on indigenous rights in Brazil

It is a crucial moment for indigenous peoples in Brazil. Indigenous peoples must cope with insufficient medical and social assistance during the pandemic. Only surpassed by the United States, Brazil is the second most badly affected country in the world and has already reported more than 100,000 deaths and 3.4 million confirmed cases of the Covid-19 disease (by August 14th).

Indigenous people in Brazil are disproportionately badly affected by the pandemic. According to a nationwide serological study, indigenous people are five times more likely to contract the virus than the Brazilian Caucasian population. Despite this dangerous situation, President Jair Bolsonaro vetoed parts of an emergency bill that would have assured access to drinking water, free distribution of hygiene products and the distribution of cleaning and disinfection materials to indigenous communities. He also vetoed a proposal ensuring mandatory emergency funds for indigenous people's healthcare. Amidst neglect by the government, the number of infected and dead among indigenous people increases daily. The advocacy group 'Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil' (APIB) reports over 24,942 infected and 669 dead among 146 indigenous communities (by August 14th). However, due to insufficient testing, the real numbers could be much higher. Among the victims are important indigenous leaders, such as Aritana Yawalapiti, Paulinho Payakan, Amâncio Ikon Munduruku, Dionito José de Souza Macuxi, and Nelson Mutzie Rikbaktsa. The loss of indigenous leaders weakens and threatens the indigenous communities, hampering the safeguard of their culture, language and traditions. The right of indigenous people to cultivate their tradition and rituals are also structurally violated by the public authorities. Many deceased indigenous were buried in a common grave at public city cemeteries without the consent or even information of their relatives. Society for Threatened Peoples emphasize the need to respect the indigenous culture and traditions and their right to self-determination.

In addition to the pandemic, indigenous people in Brazil are facing the highest deforestation and most forest fires in the last ten years. According to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), deforestation on indigenous territories has increased by 34 percent and forest fires by 20 percent, compared to last year. Mining activities on indigenous lands have also increased by 45 percent. There are currently over 20,000 gold miners in the Yanomami territory alone. The Brazilian Supreme Court mandated recently new safety measures including the supply of health assistance to indigenous territories, including the ones that are not yet recognized by the government as indigenous territory. The assistance must equally include indigenous people living in urban areas. Further, the government must establish a crisis committee involving indigenous people and support the establishment of sanitary barriers in order to avoid the dissemination of the virus into indigenous communities. However, these actions are not sufficient, since invaders are still tolerated, and the Supreme Court did not set any timeline for their exit. Loggers, goldminers, landgrabbers and cattle ranchers are even encouraged by the Brazilian Government to continue encroaching on indigenous areas. Besides destroying indigenous habitat and livelihood, these invaders are vectors of COVID-19 and bring the disease to the indigenous communities. According to a study by the ISA (Instituto Socio-Ambiental), a single intruder could infect 1600 indigenous people. Society for Threatened Peoples warns that this scenario could only be averted if an effective policy to remove the invaders from the indigenous territories is implemented and further invasions are effectively prevented.

The agrobusiness, mining and timber industry bring conflicts and violence against indigenous people. 2019 established a new grim record concerning violence against indigenous people. Twenty-four environmental activists were murdered, ten of which were indigenous people. In 2020, violence is continuing: in early August Kwaxipuru Ka'apor was murdered in the The Alto Turiaçu Indigenous Territory, where the Ka'apor and Awá-guajá indigenous peoples live. Their territory has a history of invasions by traffickers, loggers, hunters and landgrabbers. In the same week Josimar Moraes Lopes, from the Munduruku indigenous people was murdered after a conflict with the local police. The Munduruku have been denouncing environmental crimes, in this case illegal fishing. In the second week of August, Jecson Ortiz Benitez, Guarani-Kaiowá, was killed by a local criminal group, the case is still being investigated. End of June, Original Yanomami and Marcos Arokona, two Yanomami, were killed by gold miners after the indigenous found the clandestine helicopter landing strip and met the gold miners. Mid of April Ari Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, who was guarding his people against invasions, was murdered. In March, Zezico Guajajara, the 5th murder victim of his people

since October last year, was shot dead. He also has guarded his people's territory against invaders. Earlier this year, three indigenous Miranha people were murdered in the Amazon town of Coari. Since beginning of the year at least ten indigenous were murdered. Seven of them were murdered since beginning of the corona pandemic.

Society for Threatened Peoples therefore calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil to:

- implement policies that provide adequate assistance to indigenous people, considering their culture and tradition,
 - provide the legally determined budget to ensure that the Secretary of Indigenous Health (SESAI) can work and provide effective support to fight the pandemic among indigenous people, implement effective policies to remove the invaders from the indigenous territories and prevent further invasions, restoring the autonomy of the environmental institute IBAMA and providing the needed funds,
 - protect Indigenous people and their territories with efficient protection systems, based on the principles of prevention, self-determination and intangibility of indigenous rights.
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