

INDIAN LAW RESOURCE CENTER

CENTRO DE RECURSOS JURÍDICOS PARA LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS

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Call for a Thorough Investigation and Preventive Measures in Brazil

[WASHINGTON, D.C., July 31, 2019] – Last week, a group of heavily armed miners forcibly entered the Yvytotõ village of a Waiãpi community in Amapá along Brazil’s northeastern border with French Guyana. The use of force by this group of individuals caused members of the community to flee their village to save their lives. Emyra Waiãpi, the 68-year old leader of the Waiãpi people, was found dead with stab marks in a nearby river. The Indian Law Resource Center condemns this invasion and attack and urges the government to investigate and take urgent measures to protect the community and other indigenous communities in the Amazon.

This incident is not isolated. On the contrary, it is part of a rapidly escalating crisis in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest where both deforestation and attacks against indigenous peoples living on legally protected lands are accelerating. According to the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), the Waiãpi lands are indigenous lands legally demarcated and titled since the 1990s. That is, the Waiãpi people are indeed the lawful landholders, not the encroachers.

An independent and impartial investigation of all allegations surrounding this incident must be carried out promptly and effectively. The facts must be clearly determined and the perpetrators must be identified and punished according to the law. In so doing, particular attention should be given to the testimony of the Waiãpi people. Failure to do so will compromise Brazil’s reputation in the international community and before international tribunals and bodies, especially those supervising the fulfillment of human rights and environmental law obligations arising out of treaties ratified by Brazil.

The Indian Law Resource Center calls upon the government of Brazil to take effective measures to prevent similar incidents and crimes, ensure the safe return of the Waiãpi people to their legally protected lands, and carry out a thorough investigation of all allegations. We will monitor this situation very closely along with COIAB, our partner organization, and we ask for the help and support of everyone to protect and defend the indigenous communities of the Amazon as well as the Amazon rainforest itself.