

**PUBLIC**

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**Fear for safety**

**23 October 2007**

**BRAZIL**

**Around 50 Guajajara indigenous families**

**Killed:**

**Tomé Guajajara (m) 60 years old**

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Around 50 Guajajara indigenous families, in the remote Araribóia reservation in the central west of Maranhão state, are at risk of attack from local gunmen allegedly contracted by illegal loggers.

On 15 October, a group of armed men invaded the indigenous settlement of Lagoa Cumprida, killing sixty year old Tomé Guajajara and wounding two others. According to the Fundação Nacional do Índio (National Indigenous Foundation, FUNAI), a federal government body overseeing indigenous affairs, the 15 gunmen – five of them masked - entered the reservation at six o'clock in the morning. Six indigenous people were grouped on a football field and threatened, with the gunmen firing in the air. Tomé Guajajara was shot six times after wounding one of the gunmen. According to the indigenous leader, Antônio Guajajara, the gunmen said that they would return.

Federal police agents visited the reservation in the aftermath of the violence, but left soon after. When activists working for the local NGO, the Conselho Indigenista Missionário, (Indigenous Missionary Council, CIMI) visited the reservation on 17 October, they found the community in a state of fear, abandoned by the authorities. Some had fled to the nearest town; one woman was so scared that she hid in the forest for two days with her newborn child. They reported there were no representatives from FUNAI, and that no measures had been taken to protect the community.

The killing was reportedly in revenge against indigenous resistance to illegal logging in the region. At the beginning of September, after a long but fruitless campaign to get the authorities to act against repeated incursions from the loggers, the Guajajara seized a logging truck that was illegally passing through the indigenous reservation. When the loggers offered money for the return of the vehicle, the indigenous community refused to negotiate, informing FUNAI of the situation, but as tension escalated, the authorities did not intervene.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The reservation of Araribóia, one of the oldest indigenous reservations in Brazil, covers an area of 413 thousand hectares across six municipalities of Maranhão state. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the region has been subject to repeated incursions from illegal loggers. The invasions have created violent conflict with indigenous peoples and widespread environmental damage, including deforestation, forest fires and water drainage. Ninety per cent of Guajajara land is now affected by logging, hunting and land invasions, threatening indigenous livelihoods. With little to no state presence, the loggers have been free to act with impunity, buying off some of the indigenous people to divide communities. The Guajajara have been campaigning to for the redefinition of their lands, the protection of the reservation's borders and the expulsion of illegal settlers.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Portuguese or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Guajajara families in the settlement of Lagoa Cumprida in Maranhão state who are under threat of imminent violence;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the security of these families, according to their wishes;
- urging that the killing of Tomé Guajajara and the threats against the Guajajara be fully and transparently investigated and those responsible for carrying out or ordering these attacks be brought to justice;
- expressing your concern at the continuing pattern of harassment and intimidation and land degradation by illegal loggers;

- urging the authorities to fulfil their constitutional and international obligations to maintain the integrity of the Araribóia reservation, expelling illegal settlers and preventing further land degradation.
- requesting a state presence and the provision of basic services for the Guajajara and other indigenous groups, to make their lives on the reservation viable.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of FUNAI (Government Agency for Indigenous People)

Exmo. Sr. Presidente Márcio Meira

SEPS Quadra 902/702 - Bloco. A

Ed. Lex - 3º Andar

70340-904 - Brasília – DF, Brasil

**Fax: + 55 61 3226 8782**

**Salutation: Exmo. Sr Presidente**

Governor of Maranhão State

Exmo. Sr. Jackson Lago

Palácio dos Leões,

Avenida Pedro Segundo,

s/n Centro 65010-904

São Luís /MA

**Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Governador**

**COPIES TO:**

Federal Human Rights Secretary

Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos

Exmo. Secretário Especial

Sr. Paulo de Tarso Vannuchi

Esplanada dos Ministérios - Bloco "T" - 4º andar, 70.064-900 - Brasília/DF – Brasil

**Fax: + 55 61 3226 7980**

Local NGO

Conselho Indigenista Missionário, (CIMI)

Rosimeire de Jesus Diniz Santos

Rua do Pespontão,

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and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 December 2007.