

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Ill-treatment / Fear for safety

20 January 1995

BRAZIL

Adão Soares, Macuxi cow herder
João André, Macuxi leader (Tuxawa)
and other members of the Macuxi indigenous community

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of members of the Macuxi indigenous community as tensions between them and Roraima state military police rise over the Macuxi's protest at the building of a hydroelectric dam which may affect their land.

On 7 January 1995, 50 members of the Roraima state military police and seven members of the Army are reported to have expelled some 400 members of the Macuxi indigenous community of Caraparu II - including women children and elders - from their Tamandua livestock-holding area (*retiro Tamandua*). Nine Macuxi Indians were reportedly beaten with rifle butts and kicked. Adão Soares and João André sustained injuries and were detained in handcuffs for several hours.

Three houses, a cattle coral and a livestock pen were destroyed. The livestock area is some 500 metres from the site of exploratory works for a proposed hydroelectric dam on the Cotingo River.

On 14 January some 170 Macuxi Indians returned to the livestock area and began working the land. Twelve members of the military police reportedly arrived and began to cut down hammocks and destroy food and cooking pots the Indians had brought with them. When the Indians tried to prevent them doing so, military police allegedly beat 14 of them and fired several rounds of ammunition at their belongings.

The military police have now constructed a blockade preventing the Macuxi from returning to their livestock area. On 18 January four Federal Police officers and two members of the Government's Indian Agency FUNAI (Fundação do Indio) accompanied three Macuxi leaders to negotiate with the Commander of Military Police. They were refused access to the livestock holding, and allegedly told that the military police would "use their last bullet" "*gastariam até o último cartucho*" against any attempt by the Indians to return to the area.

Federal police agents are quoted as stating that military police have been intimidating the Macuxi communities by circling over their villages in helicopters, hooded and dressed in camouflage and pointing weapons down at the Indians. In protest at the expulsion, hundreds of members of Macuxi communities in other parts of the state are reported to now be converging on the Caraparu II village. On 19 January they reportedly destroyed a government airstrip, and have threatened to destroy other property if the military police do not withdraw from the area. Federal Police agents have called for military police to be withdrawn, but have themselves left the area fearing that violence will ensue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Caraparu II Macuxi community is protesting the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Cotingo River. Plans drawn up by the Roraima state government for the hydroelectric dam fail to indicate what area of land will be flooded. The Macuxi fear that as many as four Macuxi villages and surrounding land and fishing areas may be affected and that they will be displaced from lands which in 1993 the Federal Government had formally identified as

indigenous, although they have not yet been fully demarcated. Under the Brazilian Constitution, authorization for the construction of hydroelectric dams on indigenous land must be approved by Congress. Preliminary works for the Cotingo dam have proceeded on the orders of the Roraima state government in the absence of either congressional approval, or a permit from the Waters and Electric Energy Authority, and in the face of reservations expressed by the National Electricity Company (*Eletrobras*). Under Brazilian law, Federal Police are responsible for dealings with members of indigenous communities, not state police, in recognition of the likely conflict between the interests of indigenous communities guaranteed by the nation, and the local economic interests of state governments.

Macuxi Indians seeking demarcation of their lands in Roraima state, have been the repeated target of raids on their communities and ill-treatment by members of the state military police.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Portuguese or in your own language:

- expressing concern at reports of the violent expulsion of Macuxi Indians of the Caraparu II village (*maloca Caraparu II*) from their livestock-holding (*retiro Tamanduá*) by members of the Roraima state military police and that on both 7 and 14 January 1995, military police beat, kicked and wounded several Macuxi Indians;
- calling for a full inquiry into the military police operation directed against the Macuxi indigenous community in the north of Roraima state, and that those responsible for abuses be brought to justice;
- urging that the Federal Government take immediate steps to guarantee the lives and physical integrity of members of the Macuxi indigenous community in the north of Roraima state.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça
 Sr. Nelson Jobim
 Ministério da Justiça
 Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco 23
 70.064 Brasília, DF, BRAZIL

Telegrams: Ministro da Justiça, Brasília, Brazil

Faxes: +55 61 224 2448

Salutation : Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency

Attorney General

Exmo Sr. Procurador Geral da República
 Dr. Aristides Junqueira
 Procuradoria Geral da República
 Av. L2 Sul - Q. 603 - lote 23
 70.200 Brasília, DF, BRAZIL

Faxes: +55 61 313 5115

Telegrams: Procuradoria Geral da República, Brasília, Brazil

Salutation : Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency

Federal Procurator in Roraima state

Exmo Sr Procurador Federal
 Carlos Frederico Santos
 Procuradoria Federal da República

Rua General Penha Brasil 1511
69.305-130 Boa Vista, RR, Brazil
Faxes: +55 95 224 3997
Telegrams: Procurador Federal, Roraima, Brazil
Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

The Indigenous Council of Roraima
(all Indian organization)
Conselho Indigena de Roraima
Caixa Postal 163
70.300 Boa Vista, RR Brazil

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 11 March 1995.