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Brazil urged to suspend Belo Monte dam project

The Brazilian authorities must ensure the rights of indigenous communities living around the river Xingu are respected and protected, Amnesty International said today as Brazil's environmental agency approved the construction of the Belo Monte dam.

"Brazil must abide by the recommendations issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to suspend the construction of the Belo Monte dam until the rights of local indigenous communities are fully guaranteed," said Guadalupe Marengo, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

"Continuing with the construction of the Belo Monte Dam before ensuring the rights of indigenous communities are protected is equivalent to sacrificing human rights for development."

Last April, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights said the license for the construction of the Belo Monte dam should be suspended until indigenous communities are fully and effectively consulted – including by having access to a Social and Environmental Impact Assessment of the project in their languages -- and measures are put in place to protect the lives of communities in voluntary isolation.

The Commission also urged the Brazilian authorities to adopt comprehensive measures to prevent the potential spread of diseases among indigenous communities as a result of the implementation of the dam.

On Wednesday 01 June, Brazil's environmental agency approved the construction of the Belo Monte dam on the river Xingu in the Amazon area.

Environmentalists, indigenous communities, federal prosecutors, and other human rights defenders have raised serious concerns over the years about the potential impact on the human rights of indigenous communities living in the area.