



CONSELHO INDIGENISTA MISSIONÁRIO

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CIMI-CONSELHO INDIGENISTA MISSIONÁRIO
Setor de Solidariedade
Projeto "O Mundo Que Nos Rodeia"

VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIANS ON THE RISE IN PERNAMBUCO

All throughout this year the state of Pernambuco has stood out as one of those where greatest amount of violence against indigenous peoples has occurred, whether through action by agents of the public authority, or aggression by private individuals. On Sunday, September 30th, the Truká indian Admilson dos Santos (Dena) was arrested on account of a number of unfounded accusations that have served as backdrop to the attempts at hindering the legalization process of traditional territories for which the Truká have been struggling for the last several years. Furthermore, another eight warrants have been issued by the judge Maria Secundina, from the District of Cabrobó.

There are 11 known indigenous peoples in the state. They are war-stricken peoples, victims of a violent colonization process, which is ongoing even today. Because of the land dispute caused by the invasion of lands, death threats are made and moral and physical aggression practiced daily against leaders of the indigenous groups in the State. The cruelty of the aggressions is shocking. In January of this year, the State Police kidnapped and murdered two Truká indians, whose burned bodies were later found. This violence struck down one of the leaders of the Xukuru in August of this year, Francisco de Assis Santana (Chico Quelé), murdered at the behest of landowners in an ambush on his own traditional land.

For a number of years, the Xukuru and Truká peoples, respectively located 300 and 700 km from Recife, the State capital, have been waging an unrelenting organized struggle to face down the power of the large landowners who are on their lands.

The Truká managed to have all those who had invaded their traditional territory withdraw, in late 1999, with only the final compensation payments to some of these pending. Recently, payment has begun to compensate the withdrawal of invaders and for constructions erected, in good faith, on Xukuru indigenous lands. In both cases, certain families that represented the rural aristocracy in the state were affected, and for this reason have reacted violently and even with the collaboration of segments of state authorities.

These sectors utilize brute force and the tactic of criminalizing the indigenous struggles as part of their tactics, as occurs in other regions of the country. They therefore trump up accusations of alleged crimes practiced by the indians, especially by the leaders, and, armed with these false accusations, lodge a number of criminal processes and illegal imprisonments. Moreover, on innumerable occasions, Xukuru leaders have been victims of libel and have had to file for habeas corpus to avoid illegal imprisonment. Last week the bishop of the Diocese of Pesqueira, municipality where Xukuru land is located, received one calls with death threats regarding the proposal to build a shrine on indigenous lands. The purpose of the telephone calls was to attempt to convince the local bishop, Bernadino Marchiô, that the threats were made by indians.

To Cimi, there is no doubt as to the fact that this is yet another ploy on the part of the invaders of Xukuru lands, attempting to position the Catholic Church against the indians, in an attempt to weaken them. A similar contrivance was used back in 1997, when a letter was forged with accusations of alleged crimes committed by the Xukuru chief and other leaders. The "letter" was sent to the minister of Justice, written supposedly by a Commission of Justice and Peace of the Diocese of Pesqueira, soon after clarified by the bishop that it was nothing but a farce. The year after the chief Francisco de Assis Araújo (Xicão Xukuru) was assassinated, who had declared that the document was foretelling of his death.

Brasília, October 4, 2001
Indigenist Missionary Council – Cimi