



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF RORAIMA REPORT ENCROACHMENT
ON THEIR LANDS AND VIOLENCE IN THE STATE**

The Human Rights Committee of the Chamber of Representatives (CDH) held an extraordinary public hearing on Wednesday, the 16th, to receive reports of encroachments and problems related to the establishment of military units of the Army in indigenous areas in the state of Roraima. The hearing was attended by a commission of representatives of Macuxi communities of the Raposa/Serra do Sol and Yanomami indigenous areas, by the executive secretary of Cimi, Egon Heck, and by attorney general Deborah Macedo Duprat, who received death threats recently because of her work in defense of indigenous peoples.

Representative Padre Roque (Workers' Party – state of Paraná), who presided over the hearing, heard reports from the attorney general, from Funai's administrator, and from Cimi about circumstances of disregard for the constitutional rights of indigenous peoples. They expressed concern about the establishment of Army Platoons in indigenous areas close to indigenous villages, which has led to more violence and enhanced threats to the culture of these peoples. The Army ministry has plans to implement an additional Special Border Platoon (PEF) in the Yanomami area, where three of these units have been established already. In April, the Army secured an authorization from the Regional Federal Court (TRF) to build the 6th PEF in the Uiramutã village, located in the Raposa/Serra do Sol indigenous area, 350 km from Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima.

Davi Kopenawa and Alexandre Yanomami once again reported that Yanomami women have been sexually abused by Army soldiers. In February of this year, federal representative Marcos Rolim, who was then the chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the Chamber of Representatives, visited a Yanomami village in the Surucucus region to hear reports of sexual abuse. During the hearing held on Wednesday, the report of the representative was questioned by a group of representatives from the Amazon region who support the position of the Army. Marcos Rolim refused to change the contents of his report and asked representative Padre Roque to consider the possibility of submitting the facts reported therein to the Inter-American Human Rights Committee of the Organization of American States (OAS). The Yanomami expressed their position against the establishment of more platoons in their area. Outraged, Davi said that indigenous people want to take part in decisions involving their lands. "If you want to build anything in our land, talk to us first," he said. He demanded respect for the demarcation of the land of his people, the bounds of which are being contested by politicians and constantly disregarded.

The Macuxi Dionito José de Souza said that the rate of invasion of the Raposa/Serra do Sol area has increased because it is taking too long for the government to ratify its demarcation. On the evening of May 9, a group of drunken soldiers from the 7th Infantry Jungle Battalion invaded the Lage indigenous community, located at 8km from Uiramutã, carrying firearms and intimidating indigenous people with threats. Frightened, the children of the community hid in the forest and only returned to their homes in the small hours of the following day. The soldiers threatened the community with a "bloodshed" in the village. The spiritual leader of the community, Waldir Clementino, reported the incident to the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR) and Funai.

Because of all these facts, general attorney Débora Duprat warns that the problems caused by the presence of the military in an indigenous area in Roraima are escalating. The city hall and the Army have intensified developments and illegal construction activities inside the indigenous territory as a result of the delay of the government to ratify the bounds of the Raposa/Serra do Sol area. In Cimi's opinion, the strategy of the Calha Norte Project of occupying border areas has disregarded the rights of indigenous people and has given rise to violence against them, as it is based on the same colonialist and prejudiced attitude that has marked the position of the State in relation to indigenous peoples in the last five centuries. "A change in mentality is urgently required, so that indigenous peoples may be heard and respected," said Egon Heck.