

FORUM:	Human Rights Council
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Introduction

Pervasive throughout the world including Brazil is the presence of Indigenous Peoples who are guardians of unique cultural and spiritual traditions. For instance, Brazil is home to more than 300 Indigenous groups comprising of around 900,000 people. These communities are the custodians of cultural heritage. They are also instrumental in the protection of the Amazon which is crucial in the regulation of the world's climate, sequestering around 2 billion tons of CO₂ annually. Regardless of the crucial role they still play to the world's ecosystem, Indigenous Peoples face existential threats to their existence owing to the economic realities of the world, deforestation, extractive industries, and the inadequate enforcement of constitutional frameworks. The reality in Brazil is dire, as it levels as one of the most dangerous places to be a defender of the environment where Indigenous leaders are often the first casualties as they attempt to defend their lands. For these reasons, the protection of cultural heritage and Indigenous Peoples is vital, even more, considering the current situation of the world.



Indigenous group in the Amazon forest

Background

It is the 1988 Brazilian constitution that acknowledges Indigenous rights to their territories and cultural self-determination. Land demarcation was another task that FUNAI got stuck with, but results have been few and politically thorny. As of 2023, only 13 percent of Brazil has been officially recognized as Indigenous territory, and dozens of tribes are yet unacknowledged by the law, exposing them to violence and land theft. Brazil is home to 70 percent of the Amazon rainforest, the inappropriate clearing of which has led to the highest deforestation rate in the world for endangered biodiversity hotspots. didn't have enough cherries to support a second spread of larvae on our trees. Deforestation in Brazil reached



new highs at the turn of the century. Brazil, in 2021, saw the most deforestation in 15 years when more than 13,000 square kilometers of forests were lost. Indigenous territories, by contrast, are known to have lower deforestation rates than non-Indigenous areas, and so Indigenous tenure is among the most effective ways to conserve forests.

But in addition, we also have the very pressing problem of cultural conservation. Brazil boasts more than 180 Indigenous languages, but one survey found that nearly 40 percent of them are rated to be in danger of extinction. The loss of a language heralds the degradation of oral traditions that are indispensable to spiritual practices and understanding of the ecosystem. This issue, the absence of bilingual educations, is compounded with underfunded health care and other societal demands.

Problems Raised

Illegal Mining and Deforestation



Satellite image of illegal mining activity inside the Yanomami Indigenous Land in Brazil

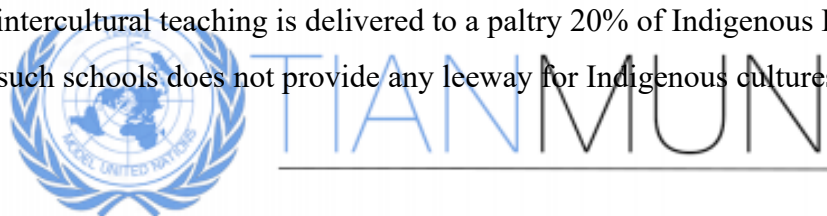
‘Garimpo’ as an illegal mining activity, particularly gold mining, has severely impacted Indigenous lands belonging to the Yanomami and Munduruku peoples. Mining releases mercury into the water and affects the fish as well as the people in the community who rely on them, leading to various neurological and developmental issues. Some villages of the Yanomami people were found to have mercury levels exceeding the WHO levels. According to Mercury: Global, Regional, and Country-Level Quantification, in 2023, the mercury levels in the Yanomami villages were 14 times higher than the WHO limit.

Violence Against Indigenous

Brazil is consistently in the global top three most dangerous nations for environmental defenders. Violent occupation of Indigenous territories has become routine. In 2019, members of the "Guardians of the Forest" member Paulo Paulino Guajajara was shot dead in defending his people against illegal loggers. These kinds of actions do not lead to prosecutions often enough—less than 10% of violent attack cases against Indigenous leaders are resolved successfully. The culture of impunity is a source for incessant threat as well as a climate of fear.

Cultural Erosion and Linguistic Extinction

Bilingual or intercultural teaching is delivered to a paltry 20% of Indigenous Brazilian pupils. Curriculum in most such schools does not provide any leeway for Indigenous cultures or languages,



accelerating language loss. UNESCO forecasts that Brazil's 70 languages will vanish in this century in the absence of action. Central to what is being lost is that Indigenous knowledge is inextricable from functionally ecological know-how, medicinal properties of plants, and oral histories built up over thousands of generations.

Health Disparities

Indian communities have higher-than-average levels of malnutrition, infectious disease, and healthcare access. Mortality in Yanomami territories is nearly four times as high as the national mean for children. Illegal mining has introduced malaria epidemics and exacerbated healthcare crises. Inaccessibility of culturally appropriate medicine widens inequalities and exposures to the tensions of modern life.

International Actions

ILO Convention 169 (1989)

This treaty obligates the states to consult the Indigenous people prior to implementing development plans. Brazil signed it in 2002, and it became enforceable internationally. Despite that, hydropower projects like the Belo Monte Dam went ahead without proper consultation, displacing more than 20,000 Indigenous and riverine individuals and flooding sacred lands.



Figure 1 Understanding the nature of modern slavery (provided by National Statistical)

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

Conceived by Norway and Germany and financed mainly by them, the Amazon Fund has backed more than 100 forest and Indigenous livelihoods projects. It halted funding during the times the Brazilian government relaxed environmental enforcement. Its resumption in 2023 demonstrates the value of international cooperation

Key Players

Brazilian Government



Different governments have embraced radically divergent policies. Some have advanced Indigenous rights, but more have attempted to unwind land protections for the sake of agribusiness and mining. The 2023 establishment of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples is an institutional step forward, but politically, the opposition is bitter.

Indigenous Organizations

Organisations such as APIB (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil) and COIAB (Coordination of Indigenous Organisations of the Brazilian Amazon) provide Indigenous voices at national and international levels. Organising mass protests such as the "Free Land Camp" in Brasília, they gather thousands of Indigenous leaders every year.

Civil Society and NGOs

NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, WWF, Greenpeace, and Survival International conduct studies, provide legal aid, and have international leverage. Brazilian NGOs such as Instituto Socioambiental (ISA) provide technical and scientific expertise in favor of the Indigenous.

Scientific Institutions

Satellite deforestation information is provided by INPE and is indispensable for transparency. Academic institutions and universities collaborate with Indigenous Australians on biodiversity, climate, and culture initiatives.

Possible Solutions

International Cooperation

Boost donations to the Amazon Fund, with funds directly going towards indigenous peoples' initiatives. Condition trade agreements, such as the EU-Mercosur agreement, establishing strong environmental and Indigenous rights protections. Introduce cross-border Indigenous action across the Amazon basin. 6. Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Application: To Incorporate FPIC Into Brazil's Legal System with Binding Clauses.

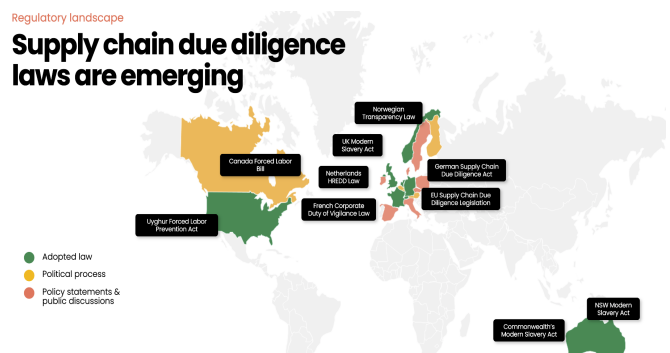


Figure 2 Supply chain due diligence law emerging (provided by worldfavor)



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Call on independent observers to witness the consultations are happening. Sanction representatives and companies who circumvent FPIC.

Reducing Violence and Ensuring Justice

Deploy indigenous-specialized police and court units to handle crimes against leaders. Upgrade witness protection schemes for dangerous activists. Offer prosecution in special environmental courts to land grabbers and illegal loggers.

Strengthening Cultural and Linguistic Preservation



Bilingual education classroom for an indigenous group

Cultural survival cannot be disentangled from environmental integrity. UNESCO has identified potentially again nearly 70 Indigenous languages may cease to exist in Brazil by 2100, and when ecosystems are destroyed, often the knowledge contained in those languages will cease to exist as well. Expanding bilingual schools, capturing oral tradition, supporting Indigenous-led media initiatives would create a stronger capacity for communities to promote the passing on of traditions. Further, increasing cultural

continuity will foster in turn a reduced vulnerability of communities from displacement and external pressures. Cultural persistence can only be strengthened if resilience is fortified through reduced incidents of violence and persecution, thus a next step must be reducing violence and impunity.

Glossary

Demarcation of Indigenous Lands

The legal and administrative process of identifying, mapping, and officially recognizing Indigenous territories. In Brazil, this process is led by FUNAI (Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas) and is constitutionally guaranteed under the 1988 Constitution. Demarcation provides legal protection from encroachment by miners, loggers, ranchers, and developers.

FUNAI (Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas)

The Brazilian government agency responsible for protecting Indigenous peoples' rights, territories, and cultural heritage. It oversees land demarcation, monitoring of violations, and the implementation of social and economic policies.



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FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent)

A principle outlined in ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It gives Indigenous peoples the ability to give or withhold consent for projects that impact their lands, resources, or communities. "Free" meaning there is no coercion; "Prior" meaning prior to approval or start of projects; "Informed" means having complete information on potential consequences.



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