

# *Brazilian indigenous leader says museum fire as worse a catastrophe as first European invasion*

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Brazilia, September 6 (RHC) – In Brazil, an indigenous leader considered that the National Museum fire there caused a loss to indigenous cultures as irreparable as that of the European invasion of their country. The first Portuguese invasion, in the year 1500, resulted in colonization and the dubbing of the territory Brazil.

Joe Urutau, of the Guajajara ethnic group, said watching the museum burn to ashes from the nearby Maracana village made him feel that the attack against the indigenous populations have not ceased since 1500. "This is an attack on the memory of the native peoples and their language (...) It was a linguicide, an epistemicide, when all knowledge is exterminated, all the culture of a people," said Urutau, who is a native linguist and researcher.

He said his people had gathered "in ritual" when they saw the building on fire and that the warriors had grabbed buckets and run to the scene believing that the flames could be extinguished, but that the fire was so overwhelming that they could only watch from a distance as the building was consumed.

The National Museum of Brazil housed some 40,000 objects from 300 Indigenous groups. It also served as the headquarters of the Documentation Center for Indigenous Languages, which held "the largest national and international collection of records of indigenous languages," Joe Urutau noted.

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