

Attempts to prevent demarcation of indigenous lands in Brazil



The UN underlined that the adoption of the "temporary framework" is contrary to international human rights standards.

(Photo:Telesur)

By María Josefina Arce

"We are committed to the indigenous peoples" stated Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva when he won the general elections last October, and after taking office as President of Brazil in January of this year he began to fulfill his electoral promises.

Lula da Silva created the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and blocked air and river transport in the Yanomami territory to restrict the access of unauthorized persons, given the humanitarian crisis of that community due to mining and other illegal activities, encouraged in recent years by his predecessor in the Planalto Palace, the ultra-right-wing Jair Bolsonaro.

One of his most important measures in his third term has been to resume the process of recognition of indigenous lands, established by law and paralyzed since 2019 by Bolsonaro.

The former president implemented a policy that denied the rights of native peoples and promoted mining and other economic activities in the Amazon, which led to record figures of deforestation of the largest rainforest on the planet.

Last April Lula da Silva signed a decree regularizing six new indigenous lands, extending over some 560,000 hectares, in addition to some 600 reserves already recognized by the state.

However, his plans have begun to run up against an adverse Congress. In May, the Chamber of Deputies approved a bill limiting the demarcation of indigenous lands taken up by Lula da Silva, considered key to protect these ethnic groups and the Amazon.

The text establishes that the territories reserved for these communities must be restricted to those occupied by the indigenous peoples at the time of the promulgation in 1988 of the current Constitution.

The so-called "temporary framework", promoted by congressmen linked to agribusiness and other opposition groups, has been criticized by Brazilian organizations which affirm that many peoples did not occupy their lands in that year, since they had been expelled, especially during the military dictatorship from 1965 to 1985.

The controversial proposal of the right wing, which must be debated by the Senate, is also before the Supreme Federal Court, which after the brief resumption in the last days of the trial postponed it, after a request for a hearing by minister André Mendoca, one of the 11 judges of the judicial body, and appointed by Bolsonaro.

The UN has also expressed its opinion on the bill, stressing that the adoption of the "temporary framework" is contrary to international human rights standards.

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