

Bolsonaro's government's abandonment of indigenous peoples



By María Josefina Arce

A recent report by the Missionary Indigenist Council confirms the constant violations of the rights of native peoples under the four-year term of office of the now former president Jair Bolsonaro, when almost 800 homicides of members of these ethnic groups were recorded throughout the country.

The document states that territorial conflicts increased, especially in 2022. In that year, 158 violent acts were reported, together with 309 cases of illegal exploitation of natural resources, invasions and damage to indigenous property in 218 indigenous enclaves in 25 states of the South American giant.

Since he arrived in January 2019 at the Planalto Palace, Bolsonaro repeatedly attacked Brazil's

indigenous communities in his speeches.

He spearheaded efforts to dismantle the now called National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples, the agency that protects the more than 300 native peoples of the South American country. In fact, in one of his first actions, he took away one of its main activities in the last 30 years: the identification, delimitation and demarcation of lands.

This responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, at the head of which he appointed Tereza Cristina Correa, a defender of agribusiness.

During the government of the ultra-right-wing former army captain, not only were indigenous lands no longer demarcated, but there was also pressure to open the reserves to mining companies.

The arrival of COVID 19 brought a new threat to the survival of these peoples. The invasion of their territories, encouraged by the President, meant the entry of the virus into their communities, to which the authorities did not provide the required health care.

The government left these peoples to their fate, and human rights organizations denounced that they were never included in the national plans to deal with the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

Such was the abandonment and attacks against these ethnic groups that, in 2021, the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil filed a complaint against Bolsonaro before the International Criminal Court for genocide and ecocide.

Two years earlier, a group of Brazilian lawyers, human rights lawyers and former ministers had also filed a complaint for crimes against humanity and incitement to genocide before the Court of Justice, based in The Hague.

Malnutrition, deaths from preventable diseases and the invasion of their lands were suffered by the indigenous Brazilians during the Bolsonaro administration. The images of malnourished Yanomami children, an ethnic group immersed in a humanitarian crisis, are still fresh in the memory.

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