

Brazil's Indigenous communities receive government apology

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Brasilia, April 10 (RHC)-- The Brazilian state issued a historic apology for the atrocities committed against Indigenous peoples during its military dictatorship. The unprecedented move came as the country marked last week the 60th anniversary of the 1964 U.S.-backed coup that ushered in the military dictatorship, which ruled for the next two decades.

Brazil's National Truth Commission found 8,300 Indigenous people were killed during the dictatorship. Others were thrown off their land, imprisoned in internment camps and tortured.

The apology came after the Guarani-Kaiowá and the Krenak Indigenous groups requested a collective apology from the Brazilian government's Amnesty Commission. During a recent ceremony, the commission's chairwoman, Eneá de Stutz, knelt in front of Indigenous leaders to ask for their forgiveness.

Eneá de Stutz said: "I'm asking for forgiveness for the persecution that in the last 524 years your people, as well as all other original peoples, suffered due to the invasion [by] the non-Indigenous people on this land that belongs to you. So, you, as leader, as the matriarch of the Krenak people, please bear our respect, our tributes and our sincere apology so that this never happens again."

Also last week, on Friday, prominent journalist, author and environmentalist Aílton Krenak became the first Indigenous member of the prestigious Brazilian Academy of Letters. Aílton Krenak vowed to use his seat to open up the elite academy to the more than 200 Indigenous languages in Brazil. He also reflected on the government's apology issued days earlier, saying: "Saying sorry afterwards means very little in terms of reparation. What we need is real reparations for Native peoples."

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