

Coronavirus kills historic leader of Amazonian Peoples in Brazil



Brasilia, May 14 (RHC)-- Messias Kokama, the main Indigenous leader of the Manaus city, died a victim of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus on Wednesday. His community mourns his departure without being able to pay homage to him with their traditional rituals.

"We lost a man who dreamed of the first Indigenous neighborhood inside a city. Today, he leaves us his example of persistence, struggle, and courage in the face of conflicts and obstacles," the Parque das Tribus-Taruma co-founder Claudia Bare said.

Chief Kokama, who died from respiratory problems a week after he was diagnosed as a COVID-19 case, founded the Parque das Tribus-Taruma Community six years ago. This is the first Brazilian Indigenous neighborhood located inside Manaus city and is currently inhabited by 3,000 people from 35 different ethnic groups.

"Manaus and Belem irradiate the COVID-19 inside the Amazon. Brazil's president keeps his promises to expand business projects into the Amazon. For many of the Indigenous peoples living there, the Bolsonaro era has become an existential threat."

A spokesperson for the Parque das Tribus-Taruma reported that this neighborhood has over 40 persons infected and that the Kokama people, which have 14,300 members in different settlements, are the most

affected by the pandemic.

As of Wednesday, the Health Ministry's Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health (SESAI) had reported 277 COVID-19 cases and 19 deaths of indigenous people across the country. In the Amazon basin, where small urban human settlements can number in the thousands, the pandemic has notoriously affected 13 out of the 20 largest cities.???????

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