

YANOMAMI: the long foreseen humanitarian tragedy

Faced with the humanitarian tragedy that has befallen the Yanomami and Ye'kuana peoples, come to public attention in January of 2023, we of the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) reiterate denunciations already made through technical notes and statements over the last four years. We vehemently condemn the illegal invasion of indigenous territories by mining enterprises and call attention to the urgent need for the formulation of an emergency plan for which we, members of ABA, and other entities subscribed below, are ready to collaborate by forging appropriate measures within the scope of our competencies.

The Yanomami people comprise a cultural and linguistic group consisting of four contiguous subgroups living in the states of Roraima and Amazonas, as well as in Venezuela. In addition to the Yanomami, the Carib-speaking Ye'kuana people and isolated peoples live in the territory. According to data from 2011, the Yanomami population totaled around 19,000 people. Although the Yanomami Indigenous Land was created in 1991, and ratified on 25 May 1992, conflicts with miners have persisted, receiving to this day only intermittent and largely ineffective attention from the Brazilian state. One of the greatest crises triggered by the invasion of miners into Yanomami territory occurred in 1993, in an episode known as the Haximu massacre. On that occasion, 16 people -- the majority of them women, children, and the elderly -- were brutally murdered.

Over the years, anthropologists have produced numerous ethnographic studies of the Yanomami, many of which have inspired actions and denunciations by ABA against the violations of Yanomami rights. In the last 4 years, these denunciations have intensified as violence against the Yanomami has gone into a brutal escalation. In March 2019, ABA together with ABRASCO (the Brazilian Association for Collective Health) condemned the dismantling of the public health subsystem for indigenous populations.¹ During a public parliamentary hearing held in the midst of the Covid 19 Pandemic (April, 2020), we alerted authorities that the viral outbreak was being aggravated by a debilitated public health apparatus that had, among other major errors, dispensed with the services of anthropology professionals in the multidisciplinary teams of basic assistance to these peoples.²

We issued warnings about the consequences for the indigenous population (among others) of fake news concerning the vaccine. We drew attention in May of 2021 to the risk of genocide of the isolated peoples and a year later, in May 2022, to the risk of genocide in Yanomami and Ye'kuana Indigenous Lands (TIYY).³ The denunciations have since been verified by connections between the invasion of indigenous lands by illegal mining, the contamination of waterways by mercury, the depletion of health services, the exponential increase in cases of malaria and the increase of everyday violence, domestic abuse,

¹ http://www.aba.abant.org.br/files/20190328_5c9cd477742d6.pdf

² http://www.abaes/20200504_5eb0519d148b2.pdf.abant.org.br/fil

³ Nota das entidades científicas: Risco de genocídio na Terra Indígena Yanomami e Ye'kuana- TIYY
http://www.abant.org.br/files/20220511_627bc46683520.pdf

hunger and malnutrition in indigenous communities -- all situations in which women, the elderly, and children are particularly vulnerable.

Notwithstanding the recent reports by the journalists Ana Maria Machado, Talita Bedinelli and Eliane Brum in Sumaúma - jornalismo do centro do mundo, on 20/01/2023 ⁴, and their repercussions, it would be convenient to recall the public notes produced by ABA and other scientific associations indicated above. Many of these documents were sent directly to the relevant authorities who have long been aware of the disastrous situation of the Yanomami and Ye'kuana Peoples. Documents produced by the Hutukara Yanomami association over the last few years served to reaffirm the catastrophic nature of prevailing circumstances.

The termination of illegal invasions as well as the promotion of health care and food security are urgently needed measures. This Public Health Emergency of National Importance (ESPIN) has been recognized by a National Ordinance (GM/MS No. 28) emitted on January 20, 2023, by the Minister of Health. The gravity of the situation brought on the opening of a police enquiry into the crime of genocide as well as environmental crimes in the Yanomami Indigenous Land, as determined by the Minister of Justice and Public Security. The creation of a National Committee, decreed by Brazil's President, to investigate the calamitous situation of health care facilities in Yanomami Territory, is equally important. All government measures are urgent and indispensable, including the decontamination of rivers and soil, poisoned by the goldminers' mercury. But it is also urgent and indispensable that Brazilian society be informed and mobilized in defense of the life and rights of native peoples.

Furthermore, one should note that the publicized images refer to only a part of the situation that has been documented among the Yanomami. There is still no information about the total area affected and its consequences, as well as the problematic situation of indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. In addition to the emergency measures, medium and long-term plans will be necessary to ensure the territorial and sanitary stability necessary for the sustainability of the Yanomami and Ye'kuana way of life.

In these times, the Brazilian Association of Anthropology reiterates the condemnation of President Jair Bolsonaro's policies voiced by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal in 2022, and joins in the denunciations presented before the International Criminal Court by the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), the Arns Commission, and the Collective of Advocacy in Human Rights (CADHu) against the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity.⁵

Brasília, January 24, 2023.

Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA)

⁴ <https://sumauma.com/nao-estamos-conseguindo-contar-os-corpos/>

⁵ <https://comissaoarns.org/pt-br/blog/tpi-informa-avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o-preliminar-da-jurisdic%C3%A7%C3%A3o-do-caso-contra-bolsonaro/>; e <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2021/10/12/bolsonaro-e-denunciado-pela-6-vez-no-tribunal-penal-internacional-relembre-todas-as-acusacoes>.

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- Nota das entidades científicas: Risco de genocídio na Terra Indígena Yanomami e Ye'kuana- TIYY.

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