

URGENT!

NATIVE LIVES MATTER!

DEFEND NATIVE POPULATIONS IN BRAZIL!

CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON BRAZILIAN CONGRESS BY

THE BRAZILIAN ASSOCIATION OF ANTHROPOLOGY (ABA).

Rio de Janeiro, June 25, 2021

The Anthropology's Associations signed below join their voices to Indigenous leaders protesting the progress of Proposed Law PL490/2007, now under discussion in the Brazilian Congress. On Wednesday, June 23, 2021, this Project of Law passed a procedural hurdle within the Committee on the Constitution, Justice, and Citizenship; it now will be considered by the entire Chamber of Deputies (Brazil's lower house of Congress) and, if passed, will be considered by the Senate.

Brazilian National Congress is dominated by agrobusiness and mining interests. As we see, it is about to vote a new law that will allow for further invasion of Indian lands, destruction of their lifeways and territories, especially in the Amazon. The centerpiece of this Project of Law is applying the "time limit thesis" to the question of demarcating Indigenous territories. This fringe legal theory holds that Brazil's Indigenous peoples only have the right to lands they happened to occupy at the time of the promulgation of Brazilian Constitution (October 1988). If this thesis is adopted, it would prevent the demarcation of any additional Indigenous territories (237 territories are currently in legal limbo), while also placing at risk the 441 already fully demarcated and registered Indigenous territories. Furthermore, PL490 would open Indigenous territories to predatory activities, including mining, ranching, and dam construction. It goes so far as to allow the State to "retake" lands if there are significant "alterations of cultural traits" within Indigenous communities. Finally, the law threatens people living in voluntary isolation by authorizing forced contact with these Indigenous communities by third parties such as missionaries in the name of the "public good."

Our anthropologists' colleagues working in the legal community are convinced that PL490 is clearly unconstitutional. In addition to violating Indigenous peoples' rights to territory (Constitutional Art 231 & 232), the law attempts to amend the Constitution, which is a much higher legislative bar. In the meanwhile, we fear what has come to be true in recent years: laws like these, even when they fail, incentivize greater violence, racism, and dehumanizing of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. PL490 gives the green light to land grabbers, throwing in jeopardy the lives and hopes of Indigenous peoples along with the very existence of the socioenvironmental systems they steward.

We need that concerned academic associations and citizens of the world express their opposition against these initiatives.

25th June 2021

Associations signing this letter with ABA:

Associação Portuguesa de Antropologia (APA) / Portuguese Anthropological Association (APA)
Association of Social Anthropologists (UK)

Dr. Patricia Birman

President of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA)

Dr. Renato Athias

Coordinator of ABA's International Relations Commission