



For the Indigenous Peoples all over the World

Open letter to the Director-General of the World Health Organization

Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Your Excellency,

The Joint Parliamentary Front in Defense of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, composed of Parliamentarians, Representatives of Civil Society Organizations and personalities undersigned, write to Your Excellency in this opportunity to reinforce the demand presented by the Alianza de Parlamentarias Indígenas de América Latina [Alliance of Indigenous Parliamentarians of Latin America] that the World Health Organization recommend that countries in the region prioritize specific measures to guarantee the protection of the lives of indigenous peoples in the face of the serious global pandemic.

The parliamentarians, members of the Alianza de Parlamentarias Indígenas de América Latina, recall that in this region of the world, indigenous peoples are among the most vulnerable groups to contagion by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), considering that:

- A) the specificities of their way of life, including cohabitation and sharing of supplies and spaces, can accelerate the transmission of the disease and hinder the implementation of preventive measures;
- B) the pre-existing inequalities in health, with the high incidence of diseases and conditions, make those groups more susceptible to complications;
- C) and, because they live in remote locations or close to small municipalities, they face serious difficulties in accessing health care services and social policies.



Historical records of the devastating impacts of infectious diseases on indigenous peoples and their communities have always also been correlated with invasion and occupation of their territories; therefore, it is necessary for the authorities to consider that today, even when the pandemic is holding back the economy, illegal mining and deforestation in indigenous lands on the continent are being carried out with full force.

This reality not only exacerbates the existing vulnerability due to the potential contact with invaders, but also exposes the indigenous communities to violence and threats, in an increasingly difficult battle in defense of their territory and natural resources against the advance of unlawful activities. In this context, isolated peoples, too, deserve special attention, because they chose not to contact the society around them and thus need their territories to be rigorously protected.

We are deeply concerned about the situation of indigenous peoples far beyond Latin America. About a year ago, at the opening of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the then president of the UN General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, stated that the world has “a historic debt with the indigenous peoples,” and that 15% of the world's poorest people are indigenous people. We also point out that in 2007 the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recognizing the right of indigenous peoples to access health services, with active participation in the formulation and implementation of health programs, the right to maintain their traditional medicines and health practices, and holding States responsible for taking the necessary measures to protect the health of these peoples (ONU, 2007).

The COVID-19 pandemic once again highlights the structural inequalities of society in its most varied aspects: income distribution; access to services, including health and social welfare services; security and protection against violence; and the defense of the territory, culture and community values of indigenous peoples. These structural inequalities have significantly impacted the enjoyment of fundamental rights by originary and indigenous peoples around the world, posing an enormous



challenge on their leaders and representatives, and demanding urgent responses from States.

What stands out in Brazil is the lack of structure of the health system in guaranteeing protective equipment for professionals who attend to indigenous people; inadequate measures to support communities, which result in displacement from villages to towns where there is community transmission of the virus; and the invisibility of indigenous people living in cities in the epidemiological reports related to COVID-19. In addition, during the pandemic, the government issued Normative Instruction No. 9/2020, allowing the regularization of invasions by non-Indians of Indigenous Lands with pending recognition processes, which is prohibited by the Federal Constitution. The measure could generate an unbridled increase in invasions and the transmission of COVID-19 to indigenous people, including those living in voluntary isolation.

In countries such as Colombia, Peru and Venezuela, indigenous peoples are also neglected by governments. The communities themselves have expended efforts to isolate their territories, facing difficulties imposed by the maintenance of extractive activities, considered essential, around the indigenous lands. Without the necessary Personal Protective Equipment, this effort puts them at even greater risk. Aid packages promised by local governments are not reaching these communities, which see illegal activities and violence escalate within their territories.

In Indonesia, a country with a high density of indigenous population, the absence of tests has resulted in thousands of people dying with the symptoms, but not being counted as victims of COVID-19. Papua New Guinea also has very little access to tests, and the national response is focused on cities. Rural health facilities are not ready for a pandemic, what is especially serious in Papua New Guinea, where there was shortage of health care personnel even before the crisis began.

At the same time, the pandemic offers a historic opportunity to address these persistent human rights inequalities and concerns, by taking a more empathetic look



at the needs of the most vulnerable and by adopting measures to minimize their negative impact.

Here we list the concerns of the main indigenous leaders, who fight for their people, their land, and their ways of being and living. In this regard, we ask Your Excellency to give special attention to the plea of the members of the Alianza de Parlamentarias Indígenas de América Latina, and to extend it to peoples from all over the world, advising all governments specifically on ways to guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples to life and health, and articulating, with other competent agencies, policies to guarantee the physical, territorial, food and cultural security of these peoples.

We particularly stress the need for Your Excellency to reinforce the following guidelines for governments around the world:

- that they consider the indigenous peoples as the population at greatest risk and vulnerability to COVID-19, and therefore they should be included in the planning and implementation of actions of the competent agencies, so that they can receive priority assistance in facing the pandemic, such as in the distribution of necessary inputs for personal and environment hygiene; in the flows and provision of diagnostic testing; in the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); and in the flow and regulation of hospital beds with artificial respirators;
- that the indigenous peoples are guaranteed the necessary and dignified conditions for the maintenance of social isolation in their communities, with the protection of their territories, guarantee of food security and access to basic sanitation and health services, as well as all social and pension rights during the period of the pandemic;
- that the involvement and participation of indigenous organizations and their representatives in planning and implementing actions for monitoring and confronting COVID-19 is secured.



Finally, we request that Your Excellency, as the maximum representative of the World Health Organization, adopt measures to encourage the creation of an Emergency Fund for Indigenous Peoples in order to guarantee the conditions to meet the urgent demands of communities in the face of COVID-19.

Brazil May 4, 2020

Signed:

1. Federal Deputy Joênia Wapichana (Coordinator of the Joint Parliamentary Front in Defense of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)
2. Marina Silva (Former Environment Minister and Former Senator)
3. Dilma Rosseuf (ex-presidente da República Federativa do Brasil)
4. Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (Ex-Presidente da República Federativa do Brasil)
5. Carlos Ayres Britto (ex-ministro do Supremo Tribunal Federal/ STF)
6. Deputada Federal Áurea Carolina (PSOL/MG)
7. Deputada Federal Benedita da Silva (PT/RJ)
8. Deputada Federal Fernanda Melchionna (PSOL/RS)
9. Deputada Federal Jandira Feghali (PCdoB/RJ)
10. Deputada Federal Luiza Erundina (PSOL/SP)
11. Deputada Federal Natália Bonavides (PT/RN)
12. Deputada Federal Perpétua Almeida (PCdoB/AC)
13. Deputada Federal Professora Rosa Neide (PT/MT)
14. Deputada Federal Sâmia Bonfim (PSOL/SP)
15. Deputada Federal Tabata do Amaral (PDT/SP)
16. Deputada Federal Talíria Petrone (PSOL/RJ)
17. Deputado Federal Aírton Faleiro (PT/PA)
18. Deputado Federal Alessandro Molon (Líder do PSB na Câmara dos Deputados)
19. Deputado Federal Alexandre Padilha (ex-ministro de Estado da Saúde)
20. Deputado Federal Camilo Capiberibe (PSB/AP)
21. Deputado Federal Carlos Zarattini (PT/SP)
22. Deputado Federal Célio Moura (PT/TO)



23. Deputado Federal David Miranda (PSOL/RJ)
24. Deputado Federal Edmilson Rodrigues (PSOL/PA)
25. Deputado Federal Ênio Verri (Líder do PT na Câmara dos Deputados)
26. Deputado Federal Glauber Braga (PSOL/RJ)
27. Deputado Federal Ivan Valente (PSOL/SP)
28. Deputado Federal José Guimarães (Líder da Minoria na Câmara dos Deputados)
29. Deputado Federal José Ricardo (PT/AM)
30. Deputado Federal Marcelo Freixo (PSOL/RJ)
31. Deputado Federal Nilto Tatto (PT/SP)
32. Deputado Federal Patrus Ananias (Secretário Geral da Frente Parlamentar Mista em Defesa da Soberania Nacional)
33. Deputado Federal Paulo Teixeira (PT/SP)
34. Deputado Federal Rodrigo Agostinho (PSB/SP)
35. Deputado Federal Túlio Gadêlha (PDT/PE)
36. Senador Fabiano Contarato (REDE/ES)
37. Senador Flávio Arns (REDE/PR)
38. Senador Randolfe Rodrigues (REDE/AP)
39. Deputada Estadual Ana Paula (REDE/MG)
40. Deputada Estadual Marina Helou (REDE/SP)
41. Deputado Distrital Leandro Grass (REDE/DF)
42. Audifax Barcelos (Prefeito de Serra/ES)
43. Alexandre Zeitune (vice-prefeito de Guarulhos)
44. Paulo Lamac (vice-prefeito de Belo Horizonte/MG)
45. Gisele Uekte (vice-prefeita de Canoas/RS)
46. Carlos Minc (ex-ministro do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)
47. Edson Duarte (ex-ministro do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)
48. Gustavo Krause (ex-ministro do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)
49. Izabella Teixeira (ex-ministra do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)
50. José Carlos Carvalho (ex-ministro do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)
51. Rubens Ricupero (ex-ministro do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)
52. Zeca Sarney (ex-ministro do Meio Ambiente do Brasil)



53. Tania Pariona Tarqui (ex-congressista/Peru)
54. Sandra Moran Reyes (ex-deputada Federal/Guatemala)
55. Cristovam Buarque (ex-senador da República do Brasil)
56. Heloísa Helena (ex-senadora REDE/AL)
57. Pedro Simon (ex-senador da República do Brasil)
58. Márcio Santilli (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
59. Marta Maria do Amaral Azevedo (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
60. Márcio Meira (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
61. Maria Augusta Assirati (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
62. Artur Nobre Mendes (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
63. João Pedro Gonçalves (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
64. Eduardo Aguiar de Almeida (ex-presidente da FUNAI e ex-membro do Foro Permanente de Assuntos Indígenas da ONU)
65. Sydney Possuelo (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
66. Carlos Marés (ex-presidente da FUNAI)
67. Ailton Krenak (escritor e liderança indígena)
68. Ana Lúcia Lage (Universidade Federal da Bahia)
69. Ana Lúcia Pontes (pesquisadora da FIOCRUZ)
70. Ana Valéria Araújo (advogada)
71. Beto Ricardo (ISA)
72. Carlos Zacquini (missionário e indigenista)
73. Célia Regina Ody Bernardes (juíza federal/TRF1)
74. Claudia Andujar (fotógrafa e indigenista)
75. Cláudia Maria Prisco Cardozo Gusmão (Escola de Sustentabilidade Integral Brasil/ França/Índia)
76. Ela Wiecko V. de Castilho (subprocuradora-geral da república e professora de direito)
77. Gabriella Barbosa Santos (professora da Universidade do Estado da Bahia)
78. João Paulo de Jesus Santos (Cooperativa dos Catadores de Reciclagem de Cajazeiras/Bahia/COOCREJA)
79. José Geraldo de Sousa Júnior (professor e ex-reitor da UNB)



80. Juliana Cristina Salvadori (Universidade do Estado da Bahia, Campus IV, Jacobina)
81. Letícia Sabatela (atriz)
82. Marcos Palmeira (ator e produtor rural)
83. Maria Elissan Barbosa Brito (Escola de Sustentabilidade Integral Brasil/França/Índia)
84. Maria Gadú (cantora)
85. Maria Elena Ferreira Silva (ONG Mutirão Agroflorestal)
86. Mariana Matos de Oliveira (Diretório Municipal do Partido dos Trabalhadores Jacobina/Bahia)
87. Nair Heloisa Bicalho de Sousa (professora, coordenadora do Núcleo de Estudos para a Paz e os Direitos Humanos da UNB)
88. Pedro Ivo Batista (Carta da Terra Internacional)
89. Philip Fearnside (pesquisador do INPA)
90. Sebastião Salgado (fotógrafo)
91. Sting (cantor)
92. Steve Schwartzman (antropólogo)
93. Susana Ribeiro Moreira (Universidade Federal da Bahia)
94. Trudie Styler (atriz e produtora)
95. Wagner Frota (Escritor e Sociólogo)
96. Agência de Jornalismo Amazônia Real
97. Amazon Watch
98. Anistia Internacional
99. Articulação dos Povos e Organizações Indígenas do Nordeste, Minas Gerais e Espírito Santo (APOINME)
100. Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB)
101. Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Sul (ARPINSUL)
102. Associação Advogadas e Advogados Públicos para a Democracia (APD)
103. Associação Alternativa Terrazul
104. Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA)
105. Associação Brasileira de Saúde Coletiva (ABRASCO)



106. Associação Civil Projeto Hospitais Saudáveis
107. Associação Cultural de Realizadores Indígenas (ASCURI)
108. Associação de Defesa Etnoambiental Kanindé
109. Associação de Preservação do Meio Ambiente e da Vida (Apremavi)
110. Associação Floresta Protegida
111. Associação Indígena Kuikuro do Alto Xingú (AIKAX)
112. Associação Juízes para a Democracia (AJD)
113. Associação para a Gestão Socioambiental do Triângulo Mineiro
114. Associação Terra Indígena Xingu (ATIX)
115. Cáritas Diocesana de Roraima
116. Centro de Trabalho Indigenista – CTI
117. COESUS COALIZÃO NÃO FRACKING BRASIL
118. Coletivo Alvito
119. Coletivo Voz das Mulheres Indígenas
120. Comissão Especial de Defesa dos Direitos dos Povos Indígenas do Conselho Federal da Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil
121. Comissão Pró Índio do Acre (CPI/AC)
122. Comitê Chico Mendes
123. Conselho Indígena de Roraima (CIR)
124. Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI)
125. Conselho Terena
126. Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (COIAB)
127. Coordenadoria das Organizações Indígenas da Bacia Amazônica (COICA)
128. Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço (CESE)
129. Copiô, parente!
130. Environmental Defense Fund
131. Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro (FOIRN)
132. Forest Peoples Program
133. Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais pelo Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento (FBOMS)
134. Fórum Indígena de Lisboa



135. Fórum Permanente da Amazônia
136. Frente Parlamentar Ambientalista
137. Frente Parlamentar Mista de Apoio aos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável da ONU
138. Frente Parlamentar Mista em Defesa dos Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais
139. Fundação Avina
140. Fundação Darcy Ribeiro (FUNDAR)
141. Fundação Esquel
142. Fundação Fé e Alegria do Brasil
143. Fundação Latino Americana (FLA)
144. Governos Locais pela Sustentabilidade (ICLEI/AL)
145. GREENPEACE
146. Grupo Ambientalista da Bahia (Gambá)
147. Grupo de Estudos em Educação e Meio Ambiente (GEEMA)
148. Grupo de Pesquisa de Direitos Étnicos da UNB (Moitará)
149. Hutukara Associação Yanomami (HAY)
150. IMAFLORA
151. Indigenistas Associados (INA/Associação dos Servidores da FUNAI)
152. Iniciativa Verde
153. Instituto Brasileiro Indigenista (IBI)
154. Instituto Centro de Vida (ICV)
155. Instituto de Estudos Ambientais (Mater Natura)
156. Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (INESC)
157. Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (IEPÉ)
158. Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ)
159. Instituto Ecumênico Fé e Política do Acre
160. Instituto Humanista para Cooperação e Desenvolvimento (HIVOS)
161. Instituto Internacional ARAYARA
162. Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil (IEB)
163. Instituto Mulheres da Amazônia (IMA)
164. Instituto Raoni



165. Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza (ISPN)
166. Instituto Socioambiental (ISA)
167. Jesuíta a Migrantes e Refugiados
168. Movimento Articulado de Mulheres da Amazônia (MAMA)
169. NIA TERO
170. Observatório do Clima
171. Observatório do Direito e Políticas indigenistas (OBIND)
172. Observatório dos Povos Indígenas Isolados e de Recente Contato (OPI)
173. Organização das Mulheres Indígenas de Roraima (OMIR)
174. Organização dos Professores Indígenas de Roraima (OPIRR)
175. Organização dos professores indígenas do estado do Acre (OPIAC)
176. Pastoral Indigenista de Roraima
177. Pastoral Social de Roraima
178. Projeto Saúde e Alegria (PSA)
179. Projeto Xingu (Universidade Federal de São Paulo)
180. Rádio Yandê
181. Rainforest Foundation US
182. Rainforest Noruega
183. Rede Brasileira de Educação Ambiental (REBEA)
184. Rede de Cooperação Amazônica (RCA)
185. Rede de Educação Ambiental do RJ
186. Rede de Mulheres Ambientalistas da América Latina (Elo RJ)
187. Rede de ONGs da Mata Atlântica (RMA)
188. Rede Eclesial Pan-amazônica (REPAM)
189. SOS Amazônia
190. Survival International
191. Toxisphera Associação de Saúde Ambiental
192. 350.org
193. Uma Gota no Oceano
194. União dos Povos Indígenas do Vale do Jav