

26 March 2021

Brazil: Munduruku Wakoborün Indigenous Women's Association broken-into and property vandalised

On 25 March 2021, the premises of the **Munduruku Wakoborün Women's Association** in Jacareanga, Pará was broken-into and vandalised by a group of miners associated with illegal mining on Munduruku territory.

The [Munduruku Wakoborün Women's Association](#) is based in the municipality of Jacareanga in the state of Pará and is engaged in defending indigenous territory in the region. The Association has been active in the defence of land and indigenous peoples' rights against the impacts of illegal mining in the Munduruku territory, located in the Cururu river basin, in southwestern Pará. The river basin, in Igarapé Baunilha, guarantees the subsistence of the populations in the area. If destructed or damaged by mining, many villages in the region would be unable to sustain themselves.

On the morning of 25 March 2021, a group of miners broke into the premises of the Munduruku Wakoborün Indigenous Women's Association and set fire to documents, office materials, furniture and pieces of indigenous handicrafts. The incident was reported to police, however an investigation has yet to be opened into the incident. The premises had been rented by the Association since December 2020 and was used to provide services to indigenous peoples. The facility was shared with other organizations such as the Da'uk Association, the Arikico Association, the Munduruku Ipereg Ayu Movement and CIMAT. The miners had come from a protest organised by a group of miners against the indigenous community's opposition to the mining in the area. During this protest, and reportedly on numerous other occasions, the miners issued death threats to members of the Association and other indigenous women who have opposed the illegal mining.

Violence has been escalating in the Munduruku territory since 14 March 2020, when a large amount of equipment for gold exploration was discovered on the territory. On 19 March, 2020, a group of armed men prevented indigenous people from accessing the land. A helicopter suspected of serving as a convoy for miners working on the illegal excavations has also been filmed flying over the area. The miners have also been reported using different underhanded tactics to encourage the Munduruku indigenous peoples to support them in attacking the territory.

Munduruku leaders have also been the target of ongoing threats and attacks. The threats and attacks have been denounced at both national and international levels, however no investigations have been sufficiently carried out. A few days prior to the break-in, the indigenous people of the region issued a [letter](#) in which they reported that they are being forced to carry out their own surveillance of the territory and requested that the authorities take appropriate action.

Since 2017, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF) has recommended urgent action by the Brazilian State in order to prevent the increase of invasions by illegal miners in Munduruku territory. Despite these calls for action, the State has not taken any measures in response, to prevent the violence from escalating further.

In August 2020, the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) initiated an inspection into the illegal mining and the intimidation of the indigenous people in the area. However, the inspection was interrupted shortly after a visit to the territory by the Minister of the Environment, Ricardo Salles, and an intervention by the Ministry of Defence. In April 2020, during a meeting with other government ministers, Minister Ricardo Salles stated that the COVID-19 pandemic could be taken advantage of as an opportunity for environmental deregulation. This type of statement from a high-level government official, encourages illegal practices of

environmental destruction and invasion of indigenous territories, causing an increase in violence against indigenous peoples, as well as indigenous peoples' rights defenders.

According to investigations carried out by the MPF, further interventions by the State include the suspected transport of miners to indigenous territories in aircraft belonging to the Brazilian Air Force (FAB). The body is also verifying the falsification of documents to create the impression that the mining is occurring legally in designated areas outside of the indigenous territory.

Front Line Defenders considers these attacks as part of a broader pattern of ongoing violence against indigenous peoples in Brazil, and is seriously concerned for the physical and psychological integrity and safety of the leaders of the Munduruku territory and the indigenous peoples' rights defenders who work to protect and defend them against such human rights violations. Front Line Defenders has been following with deep concern the escalation of violence against indigenous leaders in Munduruku territories. These types of raids, attacks and threats violate the Constitutional Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which determine the exclusive use (usufruto) of their traditional territory. Front Line Defenders condemns the attacks against the Munduruku Wakoborün Women's Association and believes this to be directly related to the legitimate and necessary work carried out by Munduruku leaders defending their land and environmental rights.