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Environment

Solidarity with the Anacé indigenous people of Brazil

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In the Brazilian state of Ceará, (on the North East Atlantic coast of the country, the eight largest in the country, whose capital is Fortaleza) indigenous peoples were silenced for centuries; first by genocide and slavery, later by a prohibition against speaking their original language and a prohibition against official marriage with anyone except white or freed black people. This reached the point that, in 1863, an official document was published, under pressure from the economic interests of the dominant elite and with symbolic force of law, which established that “there were no more Indians in the state”. Recent anthropological studies, however, revealed 14 indigenous peoples in 25 localities in Ceará, part of the 305 peoples that inhabit Brazil.

From the 1990s, the Anacé indigenous people began to suffer from a new series of attacks with the installation of the Industrial Complex and Port of Pecém. This is 50 km from Fortaleza and is the closest Brazilian port to both Europe and USA, with transit times as short as six days to New York and seven days to Portugal and Spain. Just ten years old, it is already the main Brazilian port for the transportation of fruit, cement and shoes. It is also one of the main ports for the movement of steel, iron and cotton.

This complex has two thermoelectric plants in operation (one coal, with two units, respectively controlled by EDP and Eneva, a subsidiary of the British multinational EOn and a gas plant belonging to Enel - an Italian multinational.) and a steel mill. Together, they are authorized to use 2529 litres of water per second, enough to supply more than one million people. Their consumption worsened the situation of the water reservoirs of Ceará, already harmed by 5 years of unprecedented drought and high rates of evaporation, probably as a result of climate change.

In 2015, before the start of the steelworks, the thermoelectric plants alone emitted 7.25 Megatons of CO₂ (22.7% of the total emissions of the state in CO₂-equivalent) as well as toxic gases and particulate material. This also severely impacts on the health of local communities (indigenous and non-indigenous). As if that were not enough, part of the Anacé people was forcibly removed from its territory, which remains unmarked, to a "reserve", to pave the way for the installation of an oil refinery, which is planned to happen in the coming years through Chinese investment.

Due to the delay in demarcating their lands, the Anacé communities started actions in which they mark out their own lands, which they call "retomadas". One of them (Japuara) is consolidated but covers only a small part of the territory. The new retomada attempts have met a violent response from squatters and by the state police apparatus.

In addition, due to the falling level of the reservoirs, the state government has begun to use groundwater in the region, which, according to environmental impact studies, will have a serious impact on the quantity and quality of the local water, drying up small shallow wells that serve families and small communities, and allowing saline intrusion. The Anacés are once again at the forefront of resistance against this project, having started court action and set up camp to protect their water. The camp was violently repressed and the lawsuits are still in dispute, although the government is still carrying out the work. We ask for solidarity with this brave group of fighters.

Appeal

We, social-environmental movements, indigenous organizations, environmentalists, human rights defenders and supporters of the indigenous cause, give our full and unconditional support to the Anacé Indigenous People of the

communities of Japoara and Cauã-pe and their traditional leaders. We condemn the acts of violence and the violations committed by squatters, authorities and public agents.

A month after the police twice repossessed their land by force, Anacé leaders, especially from Japoara and Cauã-pe, in the municipality of Caucaia, in the state of Ceará, still face frequent intimidation. There are reports of people passing on motorcycles, wearing helmets to hide their faces, with a message that the Anacés interpret as a threat. They fear for their lives.

The Anacé people have lived in this region from at least the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Expelled from their traditional territory, they have little basis to maintain their practices and customs. The areas in which they have been forced to live have not yet been given official status, as the federal constitution sets out, leading to a systematic advance of squatters on the small patch of land for which this people fights, at all costs, to guarantee current and future generations.

Without effective action by public authorities, especially the institutions responsible for guaranteeing the rights of indigenous peoples, such as the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF), besides the Federal Government, the Anacé People began and intensified in the last five years, a process known as "retomadas", in which they act to occupy their own land - actions carried out by indigenous peoples in several states of Brazil, mainly in the Northeast and Center-West regions.

One such retomadas in January resulted in police aggression and the repossession of the land by the state of Ceará, without any of the legal procedures that should be used in cases that directly affect indigenous peoples, such as the presence of FUNAI, the Brazilian Government Agency for Law Enforcement and the Federal Police.

In addition to the struggle for land rights, the Anacé also fight for their right to water. At the end of 2017, leaders of the Anacé indigenous people filed a popular action, in the State Court of Caucaia, against illegal water withdrawal from Lagamar do Cauã-pe, an Environmental Protection Area. In the first moment, they obtained a court decision favorable to indigenous and traditional communities. However, the state government were later granted permission to use the waters of Cauã-pe .

History of violent repossessions

On January 19, 2018, the first repossession took place, in a "retomada" area known as Lagoa do Barro, in the municipality of Caucaia, which is in the hands of squatters. The Anacé reported aggression suffered during the violent eviction, with some leaders threatened with arrest.

A few days later, on January 24, 2018, due to the fight against the withdrawal of water from Lagamar do Cauã-pe to supply the companies of the Industrial Complex and Port of Pecém, affecting the lives of 27 communities, the police carried out a further attack to repossess land. Rubber bullets and pepper spray were used, the tents where the leadership had sheltered for more than one month, to resist the irresponsible use of water to favor large capital, were overturned.

After the repossession, the Anacés, especially the community of Japoara, suffered threats, intimidation and criminalization because of their struggle for land, water and the full right to live.

We reiterate our support; we demand the investigation of the threats; we demand that the violence against Anacé People of the communities of Japoara and Cauã-pe ceases.

Solidarity with the Anacé indigenous people of Brazil

For the immediate Demarcation of the Anacé Indigenous Land!
Land demarcated, life guaranteed!

Please send your support to direitosindigenasce@gmail.com