

To High Representative Josep Borrell
To Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius



03 April 2020

Subject : Murder of Brazilian indigenous leaders and illegal logging

We learned with horror of the murder of Brazilian indigenous leader Zezico Rodrigues Guajajara on Tuesday March 31, after years of threats linked to his defence of the protected Arariboia territory, in the state of *Maranhão*.

Zezico Rodrigues Guajajara is the fifth indigenous Guajajara murdered in only five months, after Forest Guardian Paulo Paulino Guajajara, indigenous leaders Firmino Prexede Guajajara and Raimundo Benício Guajajara, and 15-year-old Erisvan Guajajara. In 2019, seven Brazilian indigenous leaders were murdered, the highest toll in two decades.

These murders are not isolated events, but are part of a broader pattern of attacks against indigenous people and protected territories in Brazil. Those attacks are enabled by aggressive rhetoric from political leaders, the practical dismantling of Brazil's indigenous agency FUNAI, and anti-deforestation enforcement agency IBAMA, police repression against organizations and individuals protecting the forest, impunity for illegal loggers and miners, and a constant array of laws slashing Brazilian environmental legislation.

As of March 2020, a new law enabling mining in indigenous territories, and one dismantling the Brazilian system of environmental licensing norms (bill 3.729/2004) are waiting to be voted on by the Brazilian Congress. These laws would fast-track approval for major infrastructure development, while dispensing with the obligation to consult communities threatened by projects that primarily serve industrial activities in the Amazon.

Meanwhile, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon reached its highest level since a decade in 2019. Deforestation hit a new high in the first two months of 2020 with 181 square miles lost in January and February, a 70 percent increase compared to the same period in 2019.

The repeated murders of Guajajara and other Brazilian indigenous leaders are a tragedy. We call on the EEAS and its representation in Brasilia to actively support full protection of indigenous people with all means available, and to monitor the investigation of the five murders with Brazilian authorities.

Zezeico's murder has to do be seen in the context of illegal logging. We call on the Commission to urgently develop a mandatory policy framework on deforestation free supply chains, and to step up the enforcement of the current EU Timber directive.

Yours sincerely,