Audience of Bishop Erwin Kräutler with Pope Francis – April 4, 2014

Holy Father,

I am very honored and happy to share with Your Holiness the concerns of all the indigenous peoples, of all the people of Amazonia and of ourselves, men and women missionaries of the Council for Indigenous Ministry, the indigenous arm of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB). I am sure that you will receive our concerns with affection.

The Council for Indigenous Missionary – CIMI
CIMI is an organization linked to the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil. It was established in 1972 during the military dictatorship. Its mission is to encourage and coordinate the pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church with the indigenous peoples of Brazil. It has as a priority a presence of solidarity, grounded in the Gospel, among these peoples in their villages, as well as to be their ally in defense of their constitutional rights and their dignity. This organization has its National Secretariat in Brasilia, the Federal Capital, along with 11regional centers and 88 base teams (*Equipos de Base*). There are 240 missionaries (lay, religious, priests, and bishops) and 30 employees (press consultants, lawyers, theological, anthropological and documentary consultants).

CIMI contributed decisively to the victory of the indigenous peoples over the Brazilian integration project during the military dictatorship and gained the recognition of "their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, and their rights regarding the lands that they traditionally occupied" (Article 231 of the Brazilian Constitution).[1]

The Attack on the Rights of the Indigenous
Political and economic groups related to agribusiness, mining and the construction industry, with the support and participation of the government of Brazil, are trying to revoke the territorial rights of indigenous peoples. To achieve their objective they are systematically employing political-administrative, judicial, and legislative tools.[2]

Paralysis of the Process of Demarcating the Indigenous Lands in Brazil
Contrary to the Brazilian Constitution, the Dilma government suspended the administrative proceedings for recognizing and demarcating in the country.[3] This paralysis in the demarcation process is one of the principal causes of the conflicts and violence that the indigenous peoples suffer.

An Increase of Violence Against Persons and Their Allies
Today the indigenous communities and the missionaries of CIMI are being systematically attacked by the deputies who look out for the interests of agribusiness and ranchers. Here are some recent examples of such violence.

<u>The destruction of a village of Pueblo Tupinambá, en Bahía:</u>

On March 7, 2013, in the municipality of Itapevi, a village of the Tubinambá was completely destroyed by armed men at the bidding of the ranchers. CIMI is providing legal and social assistance.

Burning of the house of a farmer who supported the Kaingang people:
On March 13, 2014, the farmer Alécio Andriolli, 62, saw his house burn to the ground, in the municipality of Seara, in the west of the State of Santa Catarina, on account of his solidarity with the Kaingang. The diocese of Chapecó gave the farmer economic assistance and offered legal help.

Attacks on CIMI and the Catholic Church:
Because of its defense of indigenous peoples, CIMI is also held criminally responsible and suffers frequent attacks from the representatives of agribusiness. Various dioceses (bishops) and parishes (priests) endure pressure from the ranchers.

Geographical Confinement of the Indigenous Peoples in Mato Grasso do Sul
In the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, the Guaraní–Kaiowá, with a population of 45,000, occupy less than 30 hectares (= 74 acres) of land. This confinement in such a small area brings with it deaths, suicides and horrible and permanent suffering.[4]

Endemic Hepatitis in the Indigenous Area of Valle de Javari – Amazonas
In the last ten years, many indigenous persons have died because of the inferior health care provided by the Brazilian state, especially in the indigenous area of Valle de Javari, in the State of Amazonas. About 85% of the Indians have had contact or are infected by one or several hepatitis viruses, especially hepatitis B – which is fatal and has no cure.[5]

Development Companies Have Severe Impact on the Indigenous Lands in Brazil: An Example in Belo Monte
At this moment there are 519 medium or large companies who have an impact on 437 properties belonging to 204 indigenous towns of Brazil. Flooding and deforestation, damage to the land, contamination, the spread of illnesses and internal conflicts are only some of the grave consequences affecting the indigenous peoples.

The construction of the hydroelectric facility in Belo Monte, Altamira, Prelature of the Xingu, in the State of Pará, is emblematic of this reality. All of the technical recommendations of experts in the field of energy have not succeeded in convincing the Brazilian government of its mistakes. The construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam is already causing genuine social and environmental chaos among the indigenous peoples, among the residents along the river and the urban population. About 40,000 persons are directly affected by the project and they will have to abandon their homes.

The Risk of Exterminating the Isolated Peoples in the Brazilian Amazon
In the Brazilian Amazon there are about 90 groups of indigenous people in a situation of isolation, without contact with the national society. Many of them face a great risk of destruction because of the projects such as reservoirs for hydroelectric plants, mining

projects and the large scale deforestation in order to raise livestock and plant soybeans in the region.

Solidarity with CIMI and with the Indigenous Peoples in Brazil

We in Brazil will never forget the affectionate presence of Your Holiness at World Youth Day in July 2013, and I think that Your Holiness likewise will never forget the gesture of an indigenous person who placed a feathered headdress on your head. At that moment an indigenous youth of 14 years from the town of Pataxó stated: "It seems fantastic to me that someone from our community had the opportunity to get to know the Pope. We are here representing the indigenous of Brazil." Various indigenous people of the Amazon region said that they were hoping that the Pope would help protect their lands.

We will also never forget your discourse to the bishops when you asked for "respect and protection for all of creation that God has entrusted to humankind, not to be exploited in indiscriminate fashion, but rather that it be transformed into a garden."

I thank your Holiness will all my heart for the opportunity to be received in audience.

Erwin Kräutler, C.PP.S.
Bishop of the Xingu and President of CIMI

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[1] According to date from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 2010 there were 896,000 indigenous in Brazil, living in 305 villages and speaking 274 languages.

[2] Executive Branch: Goals 419/11 and 303/12 and Decree 7957/13. Legislative Branch: Proposed Constitutional Amendments 215/00; 038/99 and the Projects of Law 1610/96 and 227/12. Judicial Branch: the instrument of "Suspensions and Security.

[3]In 2013 only one indigenous region was demarcated and there have been none demarcated in 2014.

[4] Between 200 and 2013, there were 463 suicides of indigenous persons in Mato Grasso do Sul. Of the 563 indigenous persons murdered in Brazil between 2003 and 2012, 55% (317) took place in Mato Grosso do Sul. Many Guaraní and Kaiowá families now live in camps along the highways.

[5] In 2010, in the space of 40 days, 12 minors belonging to the Kanamari people died. Another situation that concerns us is the great number of orphans who lost their parents because of these illnesses.