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Subject: **International alert – urgent protection for the indigenous peoples of Alto Acará**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are writing you to express our **deep concern** over the escalating situation in Alto Acará, which gravely affects the lives and rights of the Turiwara, Tembé and quilombola indigenous peoples in the municipality of Tailândia, in the northeastern Amazonian state of Pará.

As organizations working both internationally and nationally, **Salve a Floresta (Rettet den Regenwald e.V./Rainforest Rescue, Germany), the World Rainforest Movement, the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), the Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE), the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) North 2 and the New Social Cartography of the Amazon Project**, we are closely monitoring this alarming situation and feel compelled to bring it to your immediate attention.

Since August 20, members of 89 indigenous families from the Turiwara Ita Pew community of the Upper Acará River – adults, women, the elderly, and children – have been occupying the inter-ethnic territory they reclaimed on foot. These are their ancestral Turiwara and Tembé villages, such as Itapeua, which they claim were usurped by the palm oil company Agropalma. The community has recounted that armed gunmen were involved in their violent expulsion.

The decision to reclaim their land reflects the increasing urgency they feel to restore their dignity and survive. In a letter from the Ita Pew do Alto Acará Indigenous Association, signed by its president Hilda Turiwara and Cacique Sipriano Tembé, they describe their current state of deprivation:

"The situation of the Turiwara and Tembé indigenous people of the Upper Acará River is unbearable, with no land to work, no drinking water, no freedom of mobility and no freedom to challenge, criticize or demand our rights."

The death of indigenous Turiwara Agnaldo da Silvano, which occurred during a similar land repossession action last year, has yet to be fully investigated.

The retaking of their ancestral lands is the only means the Turiwara have found to overcome the humiliation and extreme hardship they are currently facing.

We also denounce the behavior of Agropalma's security guards. On August 21, 2024, indigenous leaders informed the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF) of disturbing actions taken by the guards: *"Agropalma's security guards reportedly confiscated food intended for the community's camp and restricted access to water, while setting traps and blocking access via the Acará river and other entry routes. the guards initiated confrontations with tear gas and stun grenades"* – According to witnesses, resulting in a child being injured.

Further adding to the severity, photographs show the company has installed barbed wire (concertina wire), known globally for causing severe injuries, along the access roads.

The nearest police station is 80 kilometers from the camp: *"We're here in the woods waiting for justice, but justice is taking a long time to reach us."*

Despite the clear need for federal jurisdiction over indigenous land disputes, the state court has sided with Agropalma, granting an injunction to repossess the land. This ruling undermines the rights of the Turiwara as an indigenous community, and it is especially troubling given the state court's lack of jurisdiction in this matter – and the speed with which it ruled, in marked contrast to the authorities' slowness to recognize the Turiwara's territorial rights. We were also dismayed to learn that the Pará state court recently rejected a request from the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office to suspend the lawsuit filed by Agropalma.

As the situation intensifies and the Brazilian authorities fail to offer effective protection, we fear the violence may escalate further, potentially resulting in further loss of life.

Everything is monoculture

As members of Salve a Floresta (Rettet den Regenwald e.V./Rainforest Rescue) and the World Rainforest Movement, we witnessed firsthand the monoculture oil palm plantations overwhelming indigenous lands during a visit to the Turiwara and Tembé communities in August 2023, together with the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) Regional North II and the Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE). These plantations bring with them environmental devastation – pesticides like glyphosate, polluted streams, and destruction due to landfill and loss of biodiversity. It was also immediately obvious that it is not the communities that are responsible for destroying the forests, but the companies and the expansion of oil palm monoculture that they promote.

The communities are entirely surrounded by oil palm plantations. Even community roads and cemeteries have been taken over, blocking access to vital spaces and cutting off their access to the river.

Testimonies reveal that state policies fail to address the needs of these traditional populations who depend on their lands for a dignified existence. During our visit to the Turiwara and quilombola communities in the Alto Acará region, we saw firsthand how Agropalma fenced off vast areas and deployed armed private security, cruelly limiting the communities' access to their traditional lands. Threats of gunfire are constant. The range of abuses and rights violations is extensive, systematic, and ongoing – documented widely in the press and by researchers in the region. The criminalization of community leaders is on the rise.

We gathered numerous dramatic accounts, such as this one from the community of Turiaçu:

"The Indian doesn't pollute – we work to preserve. The company kills, producing in our lands for export. They enter our homes and territory without our consent. They can't do that. They have armed guards who watch us, expel us, humiliate us." They went on to say that instead of palm oil, *"the company is exporting indigenous blood"*.

"The company wants to see our destruction. The state knows what's going on, but we don't understand why they won't offer a solution. The authorities don't intervene."

The Turiwara indigenous people of Alto Acará are seeking protection and justice regarding the recognition of their existence, social identity and territory.

A state that fails to enforce the law and provide human rights protections bears the greatest responsibility for these ongoing violations. It is the duty of the Brazilian state to resolve the land disputes affecting indigenous and quilombola territories in this region. The absence of a solution is at the heart of the violence.

We call for urgent action in response to repeated violations of the ethnic, territorial and human rights of the Turiwara, quilombola, and other communities, particularly in relation to the activities of Agropalma S.A. This demand also extends to other companies, such as Brasil Biofuels and Norsk Hydro, which have a significant impact on the lives of indigenous, quilombola and peasant communities in the region.

The Brazilian state is obligated to ensure protection for all traditional and indigenous peoples, reflecting the nation's pluriethnic and multicultural identity.

The conservation of rural and forest territories must finally be prioritized, with full recognition of the communities that depend on these lands for their physical and cultural survival. These communities deserve to live free from violence driven by irregular land purchases and occupation. *"It is an honor and a right for children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to live on their ancestral land,"* they told us.

Therefore, we respectfully ask you to intervene to support the Turiwara's legitimate efforts to reclaim their lands and guarantee the physical integrity of the indigenous people involved. Specifically, we demand:

- **The urgent organization of an *on-site* visit** to the Upper Acará River to document and record the violations of ethnic, territorial and human rights;
- **An investigation into the conflict initiated by Agropalma S.A.,** and a broader inquiry into the threats faced by the Turiwara and Temb  indigenous peoples from other companies, including Brazil Biofuels and Norsk Hydro;
- **A review of the behavior of the private security companies** SegurPro and MTS Seguran a, which provide services for Agropalma S.A., in relation to violent actions against the Turiwara and Temb  indigenous peoples of the Upper Acará River;
- **A full investigation into the death of Agnaldo da Silva to ensure accountability;**
- **The suspension of any incentives or financial support** for companies involved in violence against indigenous and quilombola communities;
- **Immediate acceleration** of the process to regularize indigenous, quilombola and peasant territories in the regions affected by oil palm plantations and other threats.

Resolving this crisis requires immediate institutional action to complete all necessary studies to strengthen the regional histories of belonging and ancestry of indigenous and quilombola communities to their lands.

We look forward to your reply and appreciate any information you can provide on the measures your institution will take in response to this grave situation.

Yours faithfully,

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