
Argentina: A forestry company invades Guarani community lands in Misiones

For many years now the indigenous Mbya Guarani communities from the villages of Tekoa Yma and Capii Yvaté (Pepiri Guazu) have been inhabiting lands located at El Soberbio, in the Municipality of San Pedro, Province of Misiones, where the Uruguay river descends the Mocona falls.

As Guarani people, their destination is to be eternal forest wanderers, seeking Mbaporenda, the land of no evil, where the bread tree reigns, where there are no lies and life flourishes. In addition to being their home and their destiny, the forest is the place of their ancestors, the punishment room for those who betray it and also their temple. They do not believe that the land can belong to anyone. Human beings are only passing through life, how can they be owners?

One day, in 1999 the Mocona S.A. Forestry Company started cutting the forest using machinery and heavy vehicles, opening up paths, building houses and illegally occupying the lands that belong to the ancestral territory of the Guarani indigenous communities, to exploit native forests.

The company offered the communities 30 hectares to settle them. These rejected the possibility that the land could have an owner and that they were being offered 30 hectares of those communal lands where their ancestors had lived and where they were living, borrowing them from their children. Subsequently the offer went up to 200 hectares. The company still did not understand the essence of the Guarani culture.

The situation has generated criminal and civil action in the courts of the Province of Misiones, but has not managed to curb the irrational exploitation of native forests and invasion of the indigenous communities lands. Justice has sentenced in favour of the powerful and the community lawyers are presently appealing this decision.

A campaign in support of the defence of the territorial rights of the indigenous peoples has been promoted, requesting that the National Constitution, article 75, item 17 and ILO Convention 169, addressing indigenous people's rights, be respected and inviting those who would like to join and collaborate with this campaign to send a letter of support to the indigenous Tekoa Yma and Capii Yvate communities of the Mbya Guarani People. The following address:

<http://www.wrm.org.uy/alerts/Argentina1505.html> contains a model letter and the addresses of the authorities to whom the Guarani communities would like it to be sent.