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OUR VIEWPOINT

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ISOLATION: VOLUNTARY CHOICE OR SURVIVAL STRATEGY?

neighbouring their territories, who either see them or find traces of their presence during hunting or fishing trips.

- Ecuador: The Tagaeri Taromenane Intangible Zone in Yasuní Park
  In 1999, a presidential decree created the Tagaeri Taromenane "Intangible" or Untouchable Zone (ZITT) within Yasuní National Park. This meant that the area in question would be permanently off-limits for any extractive operations, including oil drilling.

- Andaman Islands, India: Jarawa people turned into a " tourist attraction"
  Another major threat looming over some groups of isolated indigenous peoples is mass tourism. In some cases, private operators and local guides organize flights over areas where these groups are known to live, for the entertainment of tourists.

- The Sentinelese– the world's most isolated tribe?
  Living on their own small island, only 72 km2, the Sentinelese are probably the most isolated tribe in the world. They are thought to be directly descended from the first human populations to emerge from Africa, and have lived in the Andaman Islands for up to 55,000 years.

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- " There you go!"
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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Isolated indigenous peoples: Growing threats and hope for the future

Several years ago, a photograph made headlines around the world. In it, an indigenous man in a small village in the middle of the rainforest is aiming a bow and arrow up at the airplane in which the photographer was flying over the scene. The photograph attracted international media coverage because it documented the existence of a group of indigenous people living in isolation in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, removed from any contact with so-called "civilization".

Photographs and news stories of this kind tend to frighten people. The media reinforce existing

prejudices and stereotypes by reporting the “discovery” of “lost tribes” and highlighting the “threatening” gesture of the Indian aiming his bow and arrow at the photographer. These stories also tend to sensationalize the “primitive” way in which these people still live, something considered bizarre at the very least in a world where the majority of people have a cell phone, if not more than one, in which transnational telecommunications companies compete among themselves not only over “coverage areas” but also and primarily over people, viewed as “potential customers”.

At the same time, the photograph raises a question that remains hanging in the air: What is the significance of the fact that in the world today, in the 21st century, there is a group of people living in isolation, with little or no contact with the rest of the world? This is something that the media do not bother to investigate, or that they simply address in a very superficial way. This makes sense, because to explain it would be to admit that the “civilization” to which these isolated indigenous people do not belong and do not want to belong has historically been responsible for what can only be described as the genocide of indigenous peoples since the dawn of the colonial era. These uncontacted peoples demonstrate that “civilization” refuses to learn from its own mistakes and continues to seek out more land and “natural resources”. It continues to act in the same arrogant and domineering manner towards indigenous peoples, and particularly isolated indigenous peoples.

“Civilization”, which is often genuinely savage, based on an economic and productive system that exploits nature instead of protecting it and turns it into mere merchandise, is seeking to gain control over all areas that still remain free, in order to carry out more “development” projects. This includes the remote, difficult-to-reach areas of tropical rainforest where isolated peoples have sought refuge. What motivates these groups of people, of which there are currently an estimated 100 around the world, to live this way? According to researchers and support groups, these peoples simply want to live freely and independently, in accordance with their own traditions, beliefs and values – even if this means that many of them are forced to live constantly on the run because of the threats that surround them. They keep up their determined resistance against our society because of deeply negative experiences that they have suffered directly or indirectly in the past.

Perhaps their very existence is a perfect illustration of the crisis faced by our “civilization”. A society in which the majority live in overpopulated cities, where inequality and violence reign. A world in which the concept of “freedom” has become artificial, created in the imagination of “consumers” for the benefit of capital. One example is the promise of “freedom” through constant and “unlimited” access to telephone and internet service, dominated and controlled by transnationals.

At the same time, transnational corporations, with the support of governments, seek to perpetuate the gradual destruction of tropical rainforests, including those that are the “home” of isolated indigenous groups. Now they also want to gain control of intact forests in search of the new “gold”, namely “carbon credits” or “biodiversity credits”. Projects of this kind pose a real threat to isolated peoples, because they mean that instead of protecting their territories, governments will allow them to be accessed and controlled by the promoters of these projects, such as “green” corporations and big conservation NGOs.

It should be stressed that the rights and principles achieved internationally by indigenous peoples through their organizations and struggles do not address the specific situation of isolated indigenous peoples. For example, the internationally accepted principle of free, prior and informed consent is unworkable and inapplicable for these groups. How can they be consulted, how can they give or withhold their consent for “development” projects aimed at maintaining and reinforcing a “civilization” that they conceptually reject and want no contact with?

We believe that isolated indigenous peoples, with their stance of resistance and rejection towards the “civilized” world, have a great deal to teach us, without the need for us to isolate ourselves as they have. For example, these groups alert us to the need for deep reflection on how to confront the transnational corporations, banks and governments who continue to impose destructive “development” projects on us, who seduce communities with promises of benefits while history shows us that these projects offer nothing but destruction, not only of nature, but also of people, their values and their cultures.

It is urgent that we call on everyone to join in firmly defending the struggles of these isolated groups and peoples against the various threats to their survival. These peoples must have the basic conditions to guarantee their ability to survive as differentiated peoples, with the support of the state and society. It is crucial for isolated peoples to conserve their territories if they are to continue to live freely and offer hope to our crisis-stricken world. They can inspire us to seek out forms of struggle aimed at an alternative to this world of “development” and “civilization”.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ISOLATION: VOLUNTARY CHOICE OR SURVIVAL STRATEGY?

- Debunking myths: An overview of uncontacted peoples

Photo: Survival International

It is remarkable that in the second decade of the 21st century much of the available evidence points to the existence of about 100 uncontacted tribes living on our planet.

The fact that there are any at all is testimony to their resilience, ingenuity, self-sufficiency and adaptability.

Few in number and living in remote regions, rich in natural resources which are increasingly coveted by outsiders, they are the most vulnerable peoples on our planet.

The broad definition of uncontacted tribes is those who have no peaceful contact with anyone in the mainstream or dominant society.

Their situation varies widely. Some are on the run, forced into nomadism to survive the invasion of their lands by encroaching society. They rely purely on hunting animals and gathering wild foods, although they may have had vegetable gardens in the past.

Some may have been in touch with colonist or frontier society in the past, even centuries ago, and then retreated from the violence, disease and sometimes enslavement which that brought.

Some may once have been part of larger tribal groups such as the Yanomami and Ayoreo in South America, and then split off to maintain their isolation.

Whatever their history, most been forced to make big changes in their livelihoods and way of life in order to survive. In this sense the term 'voluntary isolation', often used in Peru, can be misleading since it implies they have the 'luxury' of choice. With the expansion of mega-development and construction projects (oil and gas extraction, mining, hydro-electric dams, highways), logging and agro-industries (cattle, soya and ethanol) many uncontacted peoples face a stark choice: avoid contact at all costs, or risk death from disease and violence at the hands of hired guns, settlers or construction workers.

Everything we know about these peoples makes it clear they seek to maintain their isolation. Sometimes they react aggressively, as a way of defending their territory, or leave signs in the forest warning outsiders away. Some take opportunities to acquire tools and goods through sporadic contact with neighbouring tribes.

All will certainly be watching and monitoring what is happening on and around their land, as historical accounts of violent encounters with outsiders are etched in their collective memory.

Some fundamentalist missionaries also target them. The New Tribes Mission (NTM), for example, secretly contacted the Zo'é in Brazil in 1987. Shortly after many died from disease. According to Jiruhisú, a Zo'é man, 'Before, when there was no white man, the Zo'é did not have sickness'.

In Paraguay, the NTM organized brutal 'manhunts' using contacted Ayoreo to literally hunt down their uncontacted relatives who were forcibly brought out of the forest. Several died in these encounters, and others succumbed later to disease. Many Ayoreo have now lost their land and have little choice but to work as exploited labourers on the cattle ranches that have taken over much of their territory, and the missionaries who maintain a base nearby, have been supressed many of their rituals.

Disease is a major threat to uncontacted peoples who, because they have been isolated for so long, have not built up immunity to illnesses like flu and measles. Within a year of first contact it is common for up to 50% of a tribe to die from disease. In the early 1980s, exploration by Shell led to contact with the isolated Nahua people in Peru. Within two years more than 50% of the tribe had died.

One Nahua woman recalled this time, 'My people all died. Their eyes started to hurt, they started to cough, they got sick and died right there in the forest.'
When Brazil's military dictatorship bulldozed a highway through part of the Yanomami territory in the 1970s, two isolated Yanomami communities were wiped out from flu and epidemics of measles transmitted by construction workers.

Uncontacted tribes are frequently viewed with a deep-seated racism which sees them as 'backwards', 'primitive' and 'savage'. All too often this prejudice has been used by governments who contact and integrate them into national society to justify the theft of their land and resources.

Despite the vast amount of evidence - including video footage, audio material, photographs, artifacts, testimonies and interviews - that has been collected over the years, some even deny their very existence.

In 2007 Peru's president declared that the isolated Mashco Piro were 'created by environmentalists' opposed to oil exploration. Yine people recently filmed some Mashco Piro who had come to collect turtle eggs on a river bank. More than 70% of the Peruvian Amazon has been carved up into oil concessions, many of which lie on the land of uncontacted people.

When Brazil's indigenous affairs department, FUNAI, released video footage of the nomadic Kawahiva in August 2013, councillors from the local city promptly accused it of 'planting' the tribe there to prevent local people from exploiting the forest.

Some regard isolated indigenous peoples as objects of curiosity to be exploited, wrongly romanticising them as 'relics' from our distant past. Despite a long running campaign by Survival and local organizations, some unscrupulous tour operators are still organising 'human safaris' so tourists can ogle at the recently contacted Jarawa people on India's Andaman Islands.

The last great refuge of the majority of uncontacted peoples is the Amazon rainforest. Here over 70 groups live in Brazil and 15 in Peru, with a handful in Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia. The only uncontacted people in South America living outside the Amazon Basin are the Ayoreo, who hunt in the dry forests of Paraguay's Chaco.

Brazil and Peru have departments dedicated to monitoring and protecting uncontacted tribes and have a policy of not contacting them. Brazil's unit was established in 1987 when FUNAI decided to end its disastrous forced contact missions. Now it uses satellite technology to better monitor the whereabouts and welfare of uncontacted indigenous groups, and works with neighbouring tribes and indigenous organizations, who are usually the first to report sporadic contacts or sightings. This has enabled it to map out several significant territories solely for the use of uncontacted indigenous people, minimizing the risk of potentially dangerous contact on the ground.

However FUNAI has not been able to protect many territories from invasion. While the uncontacted indigenous people in the iconic photos from Brazil's Acre state appear to be strong and healthy, with forest gardens full of produce, others like the Awá in Maranhão state have been reduced to tiny, fragmented family groups who number a few dozen, the survivors of brutal land grabbers who targeted and murdered their people. Today they are on the run from the guns and chainsaws, and face genocide unless the government acts now to evict the loggers.

One lone man in Brazil's Rondônia state, known as 'the Last of his Tribe' resists all attempts at contact and survives in a small patch of rainforest in the midst of enormous cattle ranches and soya plantations.

The world's most isolated tribe is probably the Sentinelese, who live on the island of North Sentinel in the Indian Ocean. In recent years, more than 40 isolated tribes have been identified in West Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea. Although many of these tribes have since had some contact, there are others who choose to remain uncontacted. However, it is almost impossible to obtain accurate information on them because Indonesia has banned human rights organizations and journalists from entering West Papua, so research possibilities are severely limited.

There is nothing inevitable about the disappearance of the world's remaining uncontacted tribes, but

their future does lies in our hands and is one of the greatest humanitarian challenges of this century. Whilst their right to self-determination is enshrined in international law, it can only become a reality if governments and multinationals are pushed by public opinion to uphold this fundamental right.

If we do not respect their evident choices and do not stop the destruction of their land, we will lose unique, contemporary and vibrant societies, who are part of our planet's rich diversity, and who play a crucial role in protecting some of the world's greatest biodiversity. We all stand to benefit from their knowledge and stewardship. But if we don't act now, we stand to lose whole peoples, and a part of our own humanity.

Fiona Watson, Survival International, e-mail: fw@survivalinternational.org . For more information on uncontacted tribes see http://www.uncontactedtribes.org/

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- Genocide and isolation

Photo: By Pablo Cingolani. A Yuqui indigenous girl from the Bolivian Amazon. The Yuqui were a people living in isolation until they were contacted by missionaries between 1967 and 1991. Now they are a people in a situation of extreme vulnerability, precisely as a result of this forced contact.

A century ago, in a short story entitled "Tres días en el bosque" (Three Days in the Forest), José Santos Machicado commented: "It would be unimaginable for the Toromonas to abstain from the shrieks and cries that are their custom when they capture a prey or surprise the enemy, and for these cries not to reach the town from such a short distance." (1) The density of images conveyed by this paragraph paint a portrait of the mentality of the era, when positivist thinking prevailed, Winchester rifles were always within reach, and unbridled ambition in pursuit of wealth shook the Amazon rainforest: these were the years of the capitalist boom fuelled by rubber tapping (1880-1914).

There is a whole romantic and idealistic vision of this very dramatic and yet little explored period of modern history that left its mark on the forested regions of numerous South American countries.

Although rubber tapping may have had a demonstrable influence on the territorial integration of the nascent nation-states lying along the backbone of the Andes – while also precipitating, by contrast, the consolidation of the Brazilian colossus – this cannot and should not overshadow the enormous and terrible social cost that this economic activity brought with it.

In defence of the dignity of the survivors and their current heirs and in tribute to the memory of those

who were massacred through violent actions or essentially worked to death through the hard labour to which they were subjected and condemned, it should be clearly stated that what took place in the continental Amazon in the late 19th century and early 20th century was, plainly and simply, a genocide.

The immortalization of these “pioneers” and “industrialists” in the names of provinces and towns, banknotes and monuments is nothing other than testimony to a grave historic omission: that of the full recognition of the Amazon cultures that originally inhabited these territories and the revision of this reading of the past which is merely a perpetuation of the injustices suffered. In the continental Amazon – where the economy continues to be based on feudal or trading-post models, to a large extent – a shameful internal colonialism is maintained by oligarchic and/or business groups.

In Viaje a la región de la goma elástica (Journey to the Rubber Region), written in 1894, Pando, a former president of Bolivia, illustrates an entire belief system: “It is not an easy undertaking to attack them in their villages and chase them through the forest, and only with the help of dogs, and the expert skills of men accustomed to the wilderness (…) can they be caught and overpowered.” The use of dogs is reminiscent of the Spanish conquest of the Caribbean and the Andes, of the terror they evoked among the natives and the humiliations inflicted with them. The hunting of Indians, pure and simple.

Pando’s book also celebrates the “feats” of several characters: “Mr. Mouton, whose intrepidness has been put to the test on numerous occasions (…) succeeded in pursuing and catching the savages (Guarayos) and almost totally exterminating their tribe, since only two children managed to escape.”

In this climate where the prevailing law was that of survival of the fittest, many foreigners stood out for being particularly sadistic. In 1914, Swedish naturalist Erland Nordenskiöld gathered a series of horrific accounts. A Frenchman had taken children from an indigenous village as prisoners. He camped with his people on a bank of the upper Madidi River. “The children were crying and could not be silenced. Fearing that their cries would draw the Indians, he grabbed the children by the legs and, one by one, bashed their heads against the ground.” He later adds: “Throughout the rubber tapping barracks along the Beni River there are numerous Chamas who were sold by slave hunters.” Chama and Guarayo are two names used for the same ethnic group: the Ese Ejja.

The ideology that drove the genocide is shameful even to write about: “The savage is a beast that blindly charges when angered, and beasts must be hunted (…) This very thing happens on the Madera River with the tribes of the Parintintines and Caripunas; every year there are attacks, forcing the industrialists to chase and heroically defeat them.” This was written in La Gaceta del Norte, the newspaper founded by rubber baron Vaca Diez, and datelined in his Orton rubber company barracks in 1888, at the peak of this ruthless and oppressive orgy that is so reminiscent of the Congo of Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, the classic novel that recounts the horrors experienced by the peoples of Africa faced with the same nightmare: the capitalist invasion of the rainforest.

Confronted with this desperate situation, the tribes of the Amazon sought refuge deep inside the forests, distancing themselves from the big rivers through which the invaders entered the region, escaping certain death and seeking a way to safeguard their freedom, their independence and their traditional way of life.

Nordenskiöld himself reflected on the ethical dilemma of contact with “civilization” in those years of absolute contempt for the “other”.

He recounted the story of a Chama indigenous man who came to look for his son, who was working in Cavinas, near the mouth of the abovementioned Madidi River. Thinking about the boy, and whether it would be better for the father to take him back with him, he wrote: “In the rubber tapping barracks he will be just another labourer, he will have to work for others his whole life in exchange for a meagre salary and to have food and clothing. He will learn to get drunk. In the rainforest, there are times of hunger and times of plenty. He will never feel safe from the whites and perhaps from other Indians, either. Perhaps he will have to live like a hunted animal, but he will be in charge of his own life.” Given these two options, Nordenskiöld answers his own question with no hesitation: “If I were the Chama, I would take the boy.”

The Swede’s prophecy was fulfilled, and to very wide extent: the acculturation suffered by Amazon ethnic groups throughout the 20th century is, perhaps, the saddest form of disappearance – in the silence and solitude of a dominant culture that denies their existence.

Isolation saved a small number of indigenous peoples from violent death or invisible but implacable assimilation. Those who fled and isolated themselves continue to live, until today, hidden in certain areas of the forest. The world – or more precisely, the world represented by the UN and a limited number of governments, such as the Bolivian government itself – has adopted laws, resolutions and measures to protect them, so that the last indigenous peoples in a state of isolation do not disappear. It is absolutely crucial for these laws to be fulfilled and enforced, because only some have heard of them, few understand them, and fewer still feel the depth of this human drama.

Notes:
(1) Taken from Cuentos Bolivianos (Bolivian Stories), B. Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, 1908. In this small and delicate volume, it is noted that Mr. Herder is a “papal publisher and bookseller”. This literary gem which preserves the views so precisely expressed by the rabidly anti-liberal José Santos Machicado was passed on to me by Fernando Arispe.
(2) The quotes from Pando and La Gaceta del Norte were taken from: María del Pilar Gamarra Téllez. “Orígenes históricos de la goma elástica en Bolivia. La colonización de la Amazonía y el primer auge gomero, 1870-1910”. In: Historia, UMSA, La Paz, 1990, No. 20.

Pablo Cingolani, Río Abajo, Bolivia, July 2013, e-mail: pablocingolani@yahoo.com.ar

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- Indigenous peoples in "voluntary" isolation: What's in a name?

Photo: uncontactedtribes.org

In “Los Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento: Su lucha por la sobrevivencia y la libertad” (Indigenous Peoples in Isolation: Their struggle for survival and freedom) (2002), Beatriz Huertas Castillo explains that any term used to refer to these groups is necessarily artificial, since, precisely because of their lack of contact with mainstream society, there is no way of knowing how they refer to themselves. The terms used to refer to these groups of people in general include “uncontacted”, “isolated”, “in voluntary isolation” and “lost tribes”, among others, but they all refer to the same concept. Among international organizations, the most commonly used term is “indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation”. But the adjective “voluntary” can also be controversial: although one could say that indigenous peoples living in isolation have chosen to remain isolated by their own free will, it should also be stressed that they have been forced into this “choice” by a long history of tragic contacts with the surrounding population.

Source: http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0603_aislados_contacto_inicial.pdf

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- Amazon: Peoples in flight

Image: Approximate location of indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation and initial contact. Source: Pueblos Indígenas en aislamiento voluntario y contacto inicial, IWGIA – IPES – 2012

Close to 90% of the isolated indigenous peoples still in existence live in the Amazon region, in territories protected by geographical barriers which, to an ever lesser extent, have kept the white man away from the forests where ecosystems and biodiversity are most highly preserved. These peoples have sought isolation as a way to defend themselves from contact that experience has proven to be destructive. Sometimes they have learned this directly through conflicts waged with the white man; at other times they have learned indirectly from the experiences of other peoples who have entered into contact with the outside world.

Their determination to remain isolated is demonstrated by acts of resistance with weapons, traps, and symbols and signs of warning and threat aimed at invaders. Above all, however, it is demonstrated by their systematic flight towards territories ever further removed from the frontiers of the expansion of “Western civilization”, where they attempt to maintain their traditional forms of social and material reproduction. These territories are growing increasingly scarce, and increasingly threatened by the greed and speed with which every centimetre of land is now being mapped, “georeferenced” and demarcated for the transformation of “nature” into “natural resources”. This is a “global undertaking” promoted by big capital, and it has no room for isolated peoples or territories,

only for inputs that can be incorporated into productive processes or recycled “by” and “for” these same processes. These ever shrinking territories are pockets of resistance and the determination to exist.

Currently, in Brazil, according to information from FUNAI, the government agency responsible for indigenous affairs, there are records of some 70 groups of isolated indigenous peoples and another 15 of groups considered to be living in a stage of “initial contact”.

The Brazilian constitution recognizes the particular vulnerability of indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact, and guarantees them the right to “their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, and their ancestral rights to the lands they have traditionally occupied.” It is a fact that indiscriminate contact with these groups has historically led to a significant reduction in their populations. It is in the framework of the recognition of their vulnerability and right to self-determination that “isolated Indians” are guaranteed the right to remain in isolation, and it is the state that is responsible for protecting and enforcing respect for the necessary conditions for their self-determination. Now, what would be the necessary conditions required by indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact to ensure respect for their self-determination?

Indigenous groups in isolation and initial contact live in close relation with their ecosystem and depend on its natural resources (fauna, flora and water resources), as well as sharing a spiritual relationship with their territories.

These circumstances are fundamental for ensuring their sociocultural reproduction. It is only by placing priority on them that the state will be able to effectively guarantee that indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact can maintain their own ways of education, health, eating, housing, work, leisure, safety and protection of mothers and children, thus respecting “their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions.”

Therefore, guaranteeing an ecologically balanced territory is a basic condition for these groups to have what is essential for their self-sustenance and self-determination. In addition to the essential need for territory for indigenous groups in isolation and initial contact, it is also necessary for these territories and their surroundings to be protected against invaders, as well as against external factors that provoke environmental imbalances and the transmission of diseases that are foreign to their immune systems. In the case of indigenous groups in initial contact, it has been determined that in addition to the essential requirement of territory, these groups also need “cultural interrelations” in order to affirm their identities, with the search for unity based on diversity.

The two faces of the state: Protective agent and threat factor

Even for “contacted” indigenous peoples – who are able to express and exercise their civil rights through their organizations and are less vulnerable to Western (and surrounding) society – there is widespread disregard for their rights on the part of both state and private institutions in Brazil. But in the case of indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact, the state, which is supposed to be responsible for their protection, is in fact one of the main threat factors facing them, because its agents and institutions are geared towards the “acceleration of growth”, which includes infrastructure and natural resource exploitation projects as absolute priorities.

Within the South American regional framework, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), the 2012-2022 Strategic Action Plan of the South American Council of Infrastructure and Planning (COSIPLAN) of the Union of South American Nations (known as

IIRSA-2), and the Brazilian government's Growth Acceleration Programme (PAC) all share a common goal: the development and integration of transportation, energy and communications infrastructure, i.e., "economic infrastructure". To boost trade, they plan to establish transportation corridors (for air, road, rail and water transport) and production chains directly connected to the exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources, linked with international markets, mainly in North America, Europe and now, above all, Asia. To carry out these mega-projects, according to their promoters, it will be necessary to remove certain "barriers" – meaning the Amazon and the Andes Mountains, along with their ancestral populations. This entails major legislative reforms to harmonize the national laws of the 12 countries involved in IIRSA-2, and the "integration" of strategic regions with "low population density" but large reserves of raw materials and biodiversity.

It is important to understand the persistence of the same model of coloniality in the different biophysical and sociocultural contexts of Latin America. It is the persistence of this coloniality that helps to explain the advances and setbacks experienced by indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact in Brazil in recent years. And it also helps to explain this new chapter in the "developmentalist" saga that places the South American governments at the service as the same masters as always, although in some cases – unlike other periods of accelerated modernization – they are now led by subjects who were historically oppressed by colonial policies, but pose the risk of reshaping the model of exploitation and giving a new face, more concealed and intensive, to slavery.

This article is based on: "Povos indígenas isolados e de recente contato no Brasil. Políticas, direitos e problemáticas", by Antenor Vaz, April 2013, submitted by the author and available at: http://wrm.org.uy/es/files/2013/09/Povos_Indigenas_Isolados_e_de_Recente_Contato_no_Brasil.pdf; and "Povos indígenas isolados, autonomia, pluralismo jurídico e direitos da natureza, relações e reciprocidades", Antenor Vaz, International Committee for the Protection of Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact, and Paulo Augusto André Balthazar, researcher at the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, http://onteaiken.com.ar/ver/boletin15/3-1.pdf

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- An Ayoreo poem

Photo: volunteerlatinamericablog.com

The spirit came in the form of a crow; it carried me up and said to me:

“Look at Eami tonight. You can see many fires burning.
They are the fires lit by your people, the Ayoreo, illuminating everything.”

We continued to fly and the lights went out one by one.

“This is the future of your people.
The forest is growing dark because the Ayoreo do not live there anymore.
Everything is turning to darkness.”

My grandfather sang this to me when I was a boy.
And I, Oji, remember his song.
And now my people know that my grandfather sang the truth.

Note: Eami is the word used by the Ayoreo people to refer to the territory in which they live.

http://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/

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- Brazil: Isolated indigenous peoples continue to face threats

Photo: Gleyson Miranda, 2010 – FUNAI files, source: Pueblos Indígenas en aislamiento voluntario y contacto inicial, IWGIA – IPES – 2012

The Amazon region, coveted and impacted by infrastructure megaprojects undertaken as part of the Brazilian government’s Growth Acceleration Programme (PAC) and the South American Regional Infrastructure Integration Initiative (IIRSA), which are aimed at promoting the exploitation and exportation of natural resources for the benefit of big transnational companies, is no longer a quiet and safe habitat for the peoples who have lived in the Amazon for thousands of years. There are an ever growing number of conflicts: on one side are the indigenous peoples and other traditional communities who resist the occupation of their territories in every possible way; on the other, the big construction companies, energy companies, banks, logging companies, mining companies, oil companies, ranchers and the government with its authoritarian “development” projects. In the midst of this economic model based on large-scale agribusiness, extractive industries and the export of raw materials, isolated indigenous peoples are struggling to maintain their freedom and independence by taking refuge in remote, inaccessible areas, which have become practically non-existent. The threat of the extinction of these groups of people is an increasingly real possibility. In this article we will explore some of the most dramatic situations.

1. Threats to the isolated Awá Guajá people in Maranhão

The threats to the survival of the Awá Guajá began in the 1950s with the construction of the BR 222 highway, and were exacerbated by the Great Carajás Project (financed with World Bank and European Union funds) initiated in 1982. A railway line was constructed through the territory of these people to transport minerals from the Sierra de Carajás to the port of São Luis, accompanied by a highway.

With the opening up of the Awá's lands by the Great Carajás Project, due to a lack of state control, thousands of people moved into their territory, from loggers to ranchers to small farmers. The result of this invasion was the annihilation of the Awá. "Those who were not killed by weapons very often succumbed to the diseases introduced, against which the Awá had no immune defences."

The demarcation of the Awá, Caru, Araribóia and Alto Turiaçu indigenous lands, which in addition to the Awá Guajá are also home to the Guajajara, Ka'apor and Tembé peoples, was supposed to provide some measure of protection for the areas in which the surviving isolated groups of Awá Guajá move about. This was not the case. The invaders stayed where they were, new illegal roads were built, the Carajás railway line is being doubled, and deforestation has continued, reaching 31% of the Awá Indigenous Territory, according to 2010 figures.

A petition submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights by Survival International and the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), a Brazilian NGO, reveals that "in August 2012, loggers began to converge in the direction of the village of Juriti from three different directions. In September, a team from FUNAI (the National Indian Foundation, a government agency) and other government functionaries were forced to withdraw from the territory by armed loggers." Logging activity continues to advance with impunity within the demarcated indigenous territories and trucks freely leave the area loaded with timber. The isolated Awá are therefore completely at the mercy of the loggers, exposed to all manner of violence, and even genocide. The state's failure to act is condemning the Awá Guajá to extinction.

2. Threats to the isolated indigenous people of the Upper Envira River, Acre

These are indigenous people living on the border between Brazil and Peru. On the Brazilian side they share their territory with the Ashaninka people. They are suffering the pressure of Peruvian logging companies, drug trafficking and oil industry projects moving into their lands. Their presence is frequently noted near Ashaninka and Kulina villages. FUNAI operated the Upper Envira River Ethno-Environmental Protection Front in the region, but abandoned it in the first half of 2012. A team from the Western Amazon branch of CIMI conducted a study tour of the region in early 2013 and described the situation as follows:

"The first impression is one of desolation, upon seeing the base that was abandoned barely a year ago, with weeds covering part of the houses and outbuildings. The main house was completely open and everything was overturned, a sign of the presence of people, although there is no way to confirm that the isolated peoples had been there.

"There are many abandoned communication devices in the area. At the entrance to the main house there are two apparently new batteries, possibly used for radio communications. We saw equipment that appeared to be for radio communications, a stabilizer and many cut wires. Outside the house is the parabolic dish antenna that appears to be intact despite the abandonment of the area.

"In the other buildings at the base, mainly in what appears to have been a storage shed, we

observed the waste of costly materials such as a boat motor, and outboard motor and a generator, all totally abandoned. Among the other materials scattered around on the floor, what particularly caught our attention were the hundreds of CBC brand 20-calibre cartridges. The reason for so many cartridges to be gathered in a single place is still not fully clear to us.

“We are concerned by the current state of abandonment of the base and the lack of protection of the isolated peoples, because we do not know what cultural or physical harm they could suffer if they were to come and break the batteries or take other toxic products back to their homes, for example.

“What we have been told is that the last team working there left in a great hurry, practically forced out by the Peruvians…”

In addition to the serious potential consequences of the toxic and explosive materials abandoned in the territory inhabited by the isolated peoples, the state has succumbed before the threat of the invaders and reneged on its obligation to protect these peoples.

Another form of violence against these isolated populations is the lack of adequate and regular health care in the Ashaninka and Kulina villages from the Special Secretariat on Indigenous Health (SESAI). This could lead to the silent decimation of entire communities, since isolated peoples frequently show up in indigenous homes and take objects away with them, and these could include clothing or nets contaminated with flu viruses or other diseases.

3. Threats to the isolated indigenous people of the Javari Valley

Oil companies are posing a serious threat to the isolated indigenous peoples on both the Peruvian and Brazilian sides of the border through their activities around the Javari Valley Indigenous Territory.

On the Peruvian side, the Canadian company Pacific Rubiales Energy is conducting seismic testing in the area of Lot 135, in a region where the presence of isolated indigenous peoples has been observed. Lot 135 overlaps the Tapiche-Blanco-Yaquerana indigenous territorial reserve. The company plans to clear a total of 789 kilometres of seismic lines as well as opening up 134 clearings for helicopters to land. On the Brazilian side, the National Petroleum Agency (ANP) commissioned airborne geophysical and geochemical surveys in the Acre River basin in 2007, followed in 2009 by seismic prospecting along 12 lines totalling 1,017 kilometres in the Upper Juruá River region, a mere 10 kilometres from the southern border of the Javari Valley Indigenous Territory, although one of these lines crosses a dock used by the Marubo indigenous people.

There are at least 15 isolated indigenous groups in the Javari Valley who move throughout a vast area of land. These peoples were already tormented by oil prospecting in the 1970s, which even led to conflicts resulting in deaths, raising great concern over the threat posed by oil industry activity. Even more troubling is the fact that neither the indigenous peoples nor FUNAI were informed, and much less consulted, about this new prospecting activity.

Another threat to the isolated indigenous peoples of the Javari Valley are the diseases attacking the indigenous population due to the lack of adequate medical care from the authorities. This led to the “Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley United for Health and Life” campaign, which ended in late 2012. There is an increasingly frequent presence of isolated indigenous peoples in the vicinity of the villages of other indigenous peoples who live in the Javari Valley, which raises great concern over the possibility of infection with contagious diseases that could be fatal for these isolated groups.

4. Threats to the isolated peoples in the area of impact of the Madeira Hydroelectric Complex and

the Bom Futuro Reserve, Rondônia

According to the information available, there are five groups of isolated indigenous peoples in the area of the Madeira Hydroelectric Complex. They are seriously threatened by the invasion of the Bom Futuro Reserve by loggers and by the Madeira Complex itself, which involves the construction of the Santo Antônio and Jirau hydroelectric dams, located in the municipality of Porto Velho, Candeias do Jamari and the district of Jacy-Paraná, in the state of Rondônia.

Hemmed in on all sides, these people move about near the village of Kyowã, which is a village of the Karitiana indigenous people, 90 kilometres from Porto Velho. According to reports from the Karititana, a number of people from Kyowã were gathering cashews less than five kilometres away from the village when they encountered a group of isolated indigenous people, made up of several men and women, all of them carrying bows and arrows. This group has been sighted by the Karitiana on numerous occasions, as have the traces left behind in the places where they have camped. This has provoked a sense of insecurity among the Karitiana, who can no longer freely move through their territory. On a number of occasions when they have noted the presence of isolated indigenous peoples they have tried to talk with them, to see if they speak the same language.

The sightings of isolated indigenous groups near the village led the Karitiana to notify the local Ethno-Environmental Front. According to some village leaders, nothing was done.

In October/November of 2012, employees working on the construction of the Jirau hydroelectric dam who were transporting fuel to the construction site in the district of Jacy-Paraná reportedly sighted two nude indigenous men carrying bows and arrows.

Another situation reported was that of a group of isolated indigenous peoples seen by a young man herding cattle very close to the city of Porto Velho, on the outskirts of the localities of Ulisses Guimarães and Jardim Santana.

The threats to the life of these peoples posed by these large-scale projects are obvious, given the serious conflicts that could be provoked among them, in addition to exposing them to genocide.

5. Isolated indigenous peoples threatened by the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam

On July 29, 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures for the members of the indigenous communities of the Xingu River Basin, calling on the Brazilian state to adopt, among others, “measures to protect the lives, health, and physical integrity of the members of the Xingu Basin indigenous communities in voluntary isolation and to protect the cultural integrity of those communities, including effective actions to implement and execute the legal/formal measures that already exist, as well as to design and implement specific measures to mitigate the effects the construction of the Belo Monte dam will have on the territory and life of these communities in isolation.”

Three years later, it can be seen that practically no actions have been undertaken by the government to comply with the IACHR’s request. The report “PM-382-10/P-817-11 Traditional communities of the Xingu River Basin, Pará, Brazil” released on April 19, 2013 states that “there is no knowledge or clear idea of the existence of effective actions for the implementation and execution of legal/formal measures or of the implementation of specific measures to mitigate the effects of the construction of the Belo Monte dam on the territory and life of these communities in isolation. Even after the granting

of precautionary measures by the IACHR, the state has not implemented sufficient and effective actions to protect, in particular, the communities in isolation; the measures that have been implemented are temporary and weak and have not provided efficient protection as requested by the IACHR."

Moreover, there are isolated indigenous groups in the Xingu River Basin that were not mentioned by FUNAI and therefore means of protection for them were not even considered.

6. Hydroelectric dam projects that threaten the isolated indigenous peoples of the Tapajós River Basin

There are consistent reports of the existence of at least five groups of isolated indigenous peoples in the Tapajós River Basin, a region where a series of hydroelectric dams are planned. This means that there are five more isolated groups in danger of extinction if the dams are constructed. It is troubling that the government, which is responsible for protecting the lives of these peoples, is planning projects of this scale in their territories, when it is well known that there is no way to control their effects nor means to assess their reach.

The state's approach to development endangers the future of isolated indigenous peoples

The cases overviewed above provide a clear picture of the little or no attention paid to the protection of isolated indigenous peoples. In the case of the Awá Guajá people in Maranhão and the isolated indigenous people of the Envira River in Acre, the state has succumbed to illegal logging and drug trafficking, leaving the isolated peoples fully exposed to the threats posed by these criminal activities.

Added to this are the precarious health services provided to indigenous peoples who enter into contact with the isolated groups, a situation reported in the Javari Valley and as well as the Envira River, which also places the lives of these groups in grave danger. What characterizes the role played by the state in these cases is inaction. In the case of the hydroelectric dams of the Madeira River, Belo Monte and the Tapajós River Basin (if they were to be constructed), the threat to the lives of isolated indigenous peoples would result from state action: it is the state that is planning, promoting and financing the construction of these dams, without considering the existence of isolated indigenous peoples, and then failing to adopt the necessary measures to effectively protect them.

It is extremely troubling that the government, which is aware of the violence towards isolated indigenous peoples resulting from large-scale projects in the Amazon in the recent past (such as the death of 2,000 Waimiri Atroari indigenous people caused by the construction of the BR 174 highway), would continue to serve the interests of the plunderers of the Amazon by recreating situations that endanger the lives and futures of these people.

It is clear that the state's current approach to "development" includes no space for indigenous peoples, and much less for isolated indigenous peoples. Nor is there space for traditional communities, cultural diversity or nature. It remains to be seen if this vision for the future, based on violence and predation, is the kind of vision that Brazilian society wants for itself.

Article drafted by the CIMI Support Team for Isolated Indigenous Peoples in May 2013.

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-Indigenous peoples in isolation in Peru

Photo: Mashco Piro indigenous peoples in the Madre de Dios reserve - By Diego Cortijo - Sociedad Geográfica Española, 2011. Source: Pueblos Indígenas en aislamiento voluntario y contacto inicial, IWGIA – IPES – 2012

The Peruvian Amazon and adjacent areas, across international borders, are inhabited by numerous indigenous peoples or segments of indigenous peoples in isolation. Their languages have been classified as primarily forming part of two linguistic families: Arawak and Pano. There are also numerous groups in the vast area made up of the headwaters of the Tahuamanu, Yaco, Chandless, Las Piedras, Mishagua, Inuya, Sepahua and Mapuya Rivers, to the southeast, who have yet to be identified. In addition, recent studies indicate the presence of groups possibly forming part of the Záparo and Huaorani linguistic families in Loreto, near the border with Ecuador, and other unidentified groups to the south of Madre de Dios, around the Bolivian border.

Information on their existence is mainly based on the testimonies of members of these same peoples who are now living in initial contact, and of indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants of areas neighbouring their territories, who either see them or find traces of their presence during hunting or fishing trips. These traces include homes, remnants of fires, food, clothing, utensils, arrows, roads, branches blocking the path as a warning to stay out of their territories, footprints, and others. Oil company workers, loggers, hunters, fishers, missionaries, park rangers in protected natural areas, anthropologists, military border post staff and adventurers have also been witnesses to their presence.

Historical and ethnographic sources provide accounts of the withdrawal of segments of numerous Amazon indigenous peoples to remote areas of their territories or neighbouring areas, often in situations of extreme violence, after they have put up fierce resistance to the presence and attacks of outsiders. Clashes such as these can leave their populations decimated or seriously diminished.

Source: “Perú, despojo territorial,conflicto social y exterminio”, Beatriz Huertas Castillo, in “Pueblos Indígenas en aislamiento voluntario y contacto inicial”, IWGIA – IPES – 2012, http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0603_aislados_contacto_inicial.pdf

Peoples in isolation, peoples with rights

The rights of indigenous peoples in isolation are recognized in the international legal framework, although they have only received attention in recent years. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted on September 13, 2007, guarantees the right of indigenous peoples “to live in freedom

… as distinct peoples" (Article 7) and obliges states to provide effective mechanisms for the prevention of and redress for "[a]ny action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities" and "[a]ny form of forced assimilation or integration" (Article 8.2). These rights, which apply to indigenous peoples in general, also apply by definition to indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation in particular.

Within the inter-American system, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), an autonomous organ of the Organization of American States, has addressed the subject of the rights of isolated indigenous peoples through its various mechanisms. The IACHR has granted precautionary measures (PM) for the protection of indigenous peoples in isolation that include PM 91-06 on the Tagaeri and Taromenani indigenous peoples of Ecuador and PM 262-05 on the Mashco Piro, Yora and Amahuaca indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation in Peru.

Unlike other subjects of rights, indigenous peoples in isolation, by definition, cannot advocate for their own rights before national or international bodies. As a result, the protection of their lives and cultures is of particular importance for the inter-American human rights system.

The challenges and threats tend to be the same: the gradual but persistent invasion of their territories, the legal and illegal exploitation of the natural resources found there (from the era of the rubber boom to the exotic timber, hydrocarbons and minerals extracted today), and the diseases and epidemics that these activities bring with them.

Spreading information on indigenous peoples in isolation and raising awareness of their situation and their rights is the responsibility of all of us who work in defence of human rights.

Beatriz Huertas Castillo, IWGIA,
http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0603_aislados_contacto_inicial.pdf

Peoples in isolation in reserves

To learn about the situation of indigenous peoples in isolation in reserves in Peru, we talked with Daniel Rodríguez, David Hill and Alejandro Chino Mori, who spoke from their experiences working on the Madre de Dios Reserve, the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve, and the Isconahua and Murunahua Reserves, respectively.

* Peruvian policies on indigenous peoples in isolation

Daniel Rodríguez, who has worked for the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and Tributaries (FENAMAD), said that the adoption in 2006 of a law to provide protection for indigenous peoples in isolation and initial contact implies legal recognition of the rights of these peoples and of their vulnerability, as well as establishing the state's obligation to protect them.

David Hill of the Forest Peoples Programme, who has worked as a consultant at the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve, spoke to us about the five intangible "Territorial Reserves" created for these peoples, which comprise a total of 2.8 million hectares. While these indigenous reserves are an

interesting initiative, and constituted the legal foundations for the development of special health policies, they basically emerged from the indigenous movement, which pushed for the adoption of legislation through studies and pressure, said Daniel. David agreed that state policy for the protection of isolated peoples is weak and is essentially driven by civil society.

In the meantime, the definition of the territories leaves open a legal loophole that permits the extraction of natural resources in the territories of isolated indigenous peoples for cases of "national interest". This creates a legal ambiguity that leads to contradictions between the obligation to protect isolated peoples and the promotion of extraction-based development policies in the territories, namely oil and gas drilling and other "mega projects" in the Amazon.

As an example, David referred to "the recent report by the Ministry of Culture on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the expansion of the Camisea gas project in the Kugapakori-Nahua-Nanti Reserve which stated it could 'devastate' or make 'extinct' three of the indigenous peoples living there. That report disappeared from the public sphere within a few hours, was annulled a week later, and is now being re-written, and in the meantime various Ministry personnel 'resigned.' That just shows how seriously Peru's current administration takes these issues!"

Daniel noted that a number of different groups of isolated people are currently becoming increasingly less "invisible" in certain sectors of the Amazon. Their growing proximity to others is interpreted by some as a change in their desire to remain isolated, an expression of their intention to "come out" and interact. This makes the work of protecting the rights of these people even more difficult, and highlights the urgent need to step up the minimal territorial protection efforts carried out until now.

For his part, Alejandro Chino Mori, a legal advisor on Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation at the Ucayali AIDESEP Regional Organization (ORAU), a branch of the Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP), believes that in Peru "there is no clear policy defined by the state and specifically by the successive governments in power to address indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact. The ongoing struggle of our indigenous organization AIDESEP and its regional branches like ORAU has achieved some advances so that the collective and individual rights of these people are at least respected in one way or another, but they are still not guaranteed, and they remain vulnerable."

* Number of groups of peoples in isolation

International specialists agreed on an estimate of 20 of these groups in Peru around 2005. Currently there are considered to be 15 to 20 groups comprising a total of 1,000 people from various linguistic families, primarily Pano and Arawak, but also Záparo and Huaorani, as well as others that are unknown.

The majority of members of some of these groups have established relations with national society, but some have chosen not to establish contact, such as the Matsigenka, Asháninka and Cacataibo. There are peoples with these characteristics in north and central Peru, but most of them are in the southeast of the country. Alejandro told us about the peoples who have been identified and live in the following territorial reserves: in the Mashco-Piro Reserve, the Mascho-Piro, Mastanahua and Chitonahua peoples; in the Murunahua Reserve, the Chitonahua and Mashco-Piro; and in the Isconahua Reserve, the Isconahua and Remo peoples.

* Are the existing reserves sufficient?

David answered categorically: “Absolutely not. As I’ve already said, the existing five reserves have never been properly protected, nor do they even cover all of the areas inhabited by the isolated peoples. The Madre de Dios Reserve is one example. As a result, they mean little or nothing in practice. In addition, there are the five proposed reserves which have still not been established, as well as PIAV [indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation] who live in areas where there are neither reserves nor proposed reserves.”

Alejandro concurs that the reserves for peoples in isolation are not sufficient “because their ancestral territories extend beyond the areas demarcated, for one simple reason: for them there are no set limits or borders for their movements and travels.”

Daniel also stressed, “Their relationship with their territories is dynamic and fluid. The creation of reserves with fixed borders does not align with the logic of these peoples, and particularly if they are subject to variable pressures and ecological and climate changes.”

* The situation of isolated indigenous peoples who are not in reserves

While specific realities vary greatly both between the different groups of people in isolation living in reserves and those living outside of them, Daniel noted that in general terms, these two situations do not differ a great deal, since the protection provided within the reserves is not as effective as it should be. Logically, the location of a reserve within a national park, for example, changes things, since on the one hand, there are more effective measures to keep people from moving too close and to prevent contact, but on the other hand, the objectives of these areas also include activities like tourism and scientific research, which limit the exercise of the rights of isolated peoples.

Alejandro commented that for isolated indigenous peoples who are not in reserves, AIDESEP has submitted formal proposals to the state for their recognition.

* Reserves in the process of demarcation

Several years ago, indigenous organizations, backed by other civil society organizations, proposed the creation of five reserves in addition to those already established.

The Multi-Sectorial Commission created by Law 28736, explained Alejandro, is responsible for discussing the demarcation of these new reserves. These have already received a favourable technical opinion, which needs to be approved by this commission and submitted to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers for its approval.

“In a letter to AIDESEP earlier this year,” said David, “the Ministry of Culture revealed its support for the five proposed reserves. These proposals were expected to be discussed by a cross-government commission in Lima in August, but the meeting was postponed and has been re-scheduled for next month.

“What will happen remains to be seen. Remember, since the resignations at the Ministry over the EIA for ‘Lot 88’, the personnel there now is very different. But this whole process, which is taking years and has been driven by civil society, particularly the indigenous organizations, is really quite embarrassing for the Peruvian government. Or at least, it should be. It demonstrates very clearly, once again, how little it cares about the PIAV – or, to put it another way, how little it cares for the human rights of some of the country’s most vulnerable citizens.”

* Free, prior and informed consent and indigenous peoples in isolation

UN guidelines on the protection of isolated peoples recognize isolation as an expression of political will. Therefore, the right to not participate must be respected as such, and particularly in view of the immunological vulnerability of these peoples. Peru is obliged to abide by international law, as well as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' interpretation of the American Convention on Human Rights, which the country signed in 1978.

According to David, "What it means – or rather, what it should mean – is that Peru can't grant concessions to oil and gas companies, or to anyone else, in regions where there are isolated peoples. Obviously not. They are isolated peoples! They are in 'voluntary isolation.' They are not in contact with the State, and therefore their consent can't have been obtained. However, that said, there is a danger here that this concept is manipulated and contact with the isolated peoples is sought or engineered in an attempt to comply with the law and/or make it appear their consent has been given. This would not only undermine the principles of free, prior and informed consent itself – how could any such people really be 'informed' about oil or gas operations on their territory? – but it could also be catastrophic, as I've already explained. As indigenous peoples, they also have the right to self-determination, recognized by international law. This means they have the right to live as they choose, which in this case is in 'voluntary isolation.' The Peruvian government should respect that, and, in doing so, it has the opportunity to set a progressive human rights example to other countries where there are isolated peoples too."

On this basis, said Daniel, "it is necessary to adopt decisions on each situation in particular, as in the case of the Mashco Piro group in Alto Madre de Dios, which has become increasingly visible since May 2011 and has given signs of wanting to establish communication with others. Although in this type of case it is not possible to deny the possibility of a dialectic exchange, there is a need for a process of reflection on the way and the conditions in which a process of dialogue would be initiated. This type of process to define consensual strategies for interrelations has yet to be formally initiated, and there are various area in which it is very much needed."

* New mapping technologies (Google Earth, GPS): benefits or threats for isolated peoples?

Alejandro commented that, as working tools, these new technologies make it possible to more precisely define the areas where isolated peoples live and pinpoint the exact spots where they have been sighted or where evidence of their presence has been found.

Daniel commented on his own experience: "This is a key point. Images of isolated indigenous peoples accompanied by their location have become increasingly frequent in the media. Politically, these materials play a very important role, because in Peru, the existence of these peoples has been publicly and repeatedly questioned by certain sectors of the government. The struggle for the rights of these people has been largely focused on demonstrating their existence nationally and globally. One of the clearest cases is the dissemination by FUNAI [the Brazilian government agency for indigenous affairs] of aerial photos of a group of isolated indigenous people on the border between Peru and Brazil in 2008.

"It is also necessary to reflect on the use of these images: publicly exposing a group on a repeated basis in the media entails risks because of the 'pull effect' it can have on third parties, and it also raises ethical issues around the use of their image. In the specific case of the Mashco Piro group in Alto Madre de Dios, this exposure has not translated into significant changes in public policies for their protection."

The situation in the Madre de Dios Reserve

– in conversation with Daniel Rodríguez –

* What are the characteristics of the Madre de Dios Reserve, including the area it covers in relation to existing groups of PIAV?

“The Madre de Dios Reserve was a solution for the protection of the territory of isolated peoples in the north of the department Madre de Dios, adopted during a politically and economically turbulent time in the region.

“A consensus was reached for the delimitation of the area without taking into account the information available on the territory actually inhabited by the isolated groups, and so the eastern border separating the reserve from the area of forest concessions is artificial.

“The presence of isolated peoples outside the reserve is a problem that has become more accentuated in recent years and has created complex challenges, because the territories used by these peoples overlap with the rights of other indigenous peoples who inhabit the area.

“At the same time, the Madre de Dios Reserve is paradigmatic model for the protection of rights in Peru – particularly because of the notable and sustained absence of a state presence and the predominant role of civil society, primarily of the regional indigenous organization FENAMAD, in the implementation of protection policies. FENAMAD played a catalytic role in the creation of the reserve in 2002, which continues through its work in the protection of the territory and early warning efforts, in coordination with neighbouring indigenous communities, particularly in the Las Piedras River basin.

“In recent years the state, through the agency responsible for policies on the protection of isolated peoples, INDEPA, has expressed interest in taking over the protection of the reserve. These initiatives have not moved beyond declarations and have not yielded any practical results. Moreover, there has been a tendency to not recognize the work and the role of indigenous organizations and communities, which has exacerbated conflicts between indigenous organizations and the state over the legitimate representation of the interests of isolated peoples.

* What are the threats to PIAV in these regions and what are the current trends? Are these threats the same as when the reserves were created, or are there others now?

“There have been significant changes in the Madre de Dios Reserve. The nature of the threats is not as visible as at the time of its creation and in subsequent years, in the sense that there is no longer a massive presence of illegal loggers within the reserve – although there are still areas where illegal logging continues. Logging activity has been largely formalized and is carried out around the reserve. These big companies are working in areas that directly border on the reserve and are occupied by isolated peoples. Many of these companies are certified and have declared an interest in contributing to the

protection of the reserve, but we have information that they have continued to extract timber from areas of their concessions where the presence of isolated peoples has been recorded, which poses a risk to the lives of their workers and the indigenous peoples. This is a complex situation. The companies have rights that were granted to them by the state, but it should be kept in mind that the granting of these concessions during the creation of the reserve resulted from political negotiation and not from a decision based on the available information on the actual use of the territory by isolated peoples.

"In the meantime, there are a series of issues that are less tangible that affect isolated peoples, such as the complex relations between isolated peoples and their neighbours, or ecological and climate changes. In the case of the Macopiro, they move around within vast areas of land on the basis of resources that are available in certain places, such as rivers, where they go during dry periods in search of turtle eggs and other game. Severe droughts that lengthen the dry summer season and dry up the rivers lead these isolated peoples to spend more time on the banks of the rivers, without returning to higher areas, leading to encounters on the beaches, and the consequences these have. The effects of climate change are also altering hunting patterns.

"There is no doubt that development projects in nearby areas have had a major impact on the mobility of isolated indigenous peoples, while it has also become evident that there are outsiders passing through the reserve, including individuals involved in drug trafficking."

The situation on the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve
– in conversation with David Hill –

* What are the characteristics of the Nahua Kugapakori Reserve, including the area it covers in relation to existing groups of PIAV?

"This reserve was established in 1990 and then given greater legal protection by a Supreme Decree in 2003 which changed its title to include, as well as the Kugapakori and the Nahua, the Nanti and 'others.' It stretches for over 450,000 hectares and sits between the River Urubamba, one of the principal sources of the River Amazon, and the Manu National Park, described by UNESCO as the most biodiverse place on the planet. However, like the other four reserves, this one has never been properly protected. In fact, it's a particularly tragic irony that this reserve has the 'best' legal protection of all the existing reserves and even has a few government-funded control posts, but it is actually the least protected in practice.

"In 2000 the Peruvian government signed a contract with the Camisea consortium to operate in a concession called 'Lot 88', almost 75% of which is superimposed over the reserve and which almost cuts it entirely in half. Pluspetrol has been there ever since, exploring for gas, drilling and pumping, and it now plans to expand its operations further north, east and south into the

reserve, which is what prompted an appeal to the United Nations in January this year by national indigenous organization AIDESEP, regional indigenous organizations COMARU and ORAU, and the Forest Peoples Programme, for whom I'm working as a consultant. These expansion plans include drilling wells and conducting 2D and 3D seismic tests in areas used by the PIAV: e.g. in the south-east and north-east of Lot 88 in the headwaters of the River Cashiriari and River Serjali. Pluspetrol openly acknowledges this in its EIA. It states that the PIAV are very vulnerable, that contact is 'probable', and that, in general, contact can lead to 'massive deaths.' Indeed, the EIA also acknowledges that operations by Pluspetrol in 2002 and 2003 led to forced contact with some Matsigenka in 'voluntary isolation', and quotes Peruvian anthropologist Beatriz Huertas Castillo that the Camisea project has forced contact with some of the Nanti too."

* What are the threats to PIAV in these regions and what are the current trends?

"The demand for oil is one of the biggest threats. Perenco, Repsol and Subandean operate in 'Lot 67', 'Lot 39' and 'Lot 121' in northern Peru near the Ecuadorian border, and Pacific Rubiales is in 'Lot 137' in northern Peru near the border with Brazil. All of these concessions overlap areas inhabited by the PIAV and proposed reserves. These operations are at different stages and therefore the threats vary.

"Perenco is sitting on deposits declared commercially viable back in December 2006 and it had been hoping to start pumping by July this year, and the kind of infrastructure this requires – platforms, wells and eventually a pipeline – means that the company intends to remain there, in PIAV territory, for many years. Repsol, by contrast, has announced a series of finds since 2005, but is continuing to explore, by drilling wells and conducting more seismic tests, while Pacific Rubiales only started its seismic tests very recently. Of course, conducting such tests doesn't mean that the company will spend as long in any one area as it would if it discovered deposits it intended to exploit, but as Peru's Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsperson) has acknowledged, it is the exploration stage that is most likely to lead to contact because of the way the seismic teams move about. As has been emphasized over and over again, any kind of contact – and I mean ANY – between the PIAV and company workers could be catastrophic because of their lack of immunological defences and the fact that even colds and flu, if transmitted, can easily kill them. Of course, that's to say nothing of what happens when the oil is spilled. Look at the River Corrientes in northern Peru to see how devastating that can be.

"Gas is another big threat, as I've already made clear. Not only in 'Lot 88', though. It's also possible the government will establish another concession, 'Lot Fitzcarrald', which would beimmediately to the east of 'Lot 88' and immediately to the far west of Manu National Park and would completely split the Kugapakori-Nahua-Nanti Reserve into two. Peru's Energy Minister played down 'Lot Fitzcarrald' at a hearing in Peru's Congress in April, following considerable media interest and some civil society opposition, and some

people appear to think it's no more than a myth or a fantasy, but the threat remains. No doubt about it."

* Are there other threats?

"Certainly. The reserves have all been invaded repeatedly by loggers, and then there are Christian missionaries, drug traffickers, occasional tourists and even film-makers seeking exotic subjects. The missionaries can be particularly dangerous because they actually want to make contact with the PIAV, unlike the loggers, drug traffickers and oil and gas companies, etc., for whom they're either simply inconvenient, or a potential threat to life, or, for the latter at least, a potential public relations problem. The loggers can be particularly dangerous too. Despite efforts to control logging by establishing concessions, many of them overlap unprotected PIAV territories, while illegal logging outside of these concessions is still rampant in remote tributaries where valuable hardwoods remain. Of course, all this is completely unregulated, and the loggers, unlike the oil and gas companies, often carry guns. I've seen them myself, armed, boating upriver into one of the reserves. No one there to stop them. Sometimes you hear reports of skirmishes and loggers being wounded, or even killed, by the PIAV, but you never hear how many indigenous people died."

* Are these threats the same as when the reserves were created, or are there others now?

"I think that most of the threats remain the same. However, while the principal threat, say, 10 years ago, was from logging, today it is most clearly from oil and gas. Estimates vary, but the percentage of the Peruvian Amazon currently overlapped by oil and gas concessions is very high. Just look at a map! That said, there is a whole new threat that is, in the long-term, potentially more serious than any of the others. The 2006 law I mentioned earlier? One of the things that law does is create a new legal category for the PIAV called 'Indigenous Reserve' where, according to the law's Article 5, Clause C, natural resources can be exploited if deemed to be in the 'public necessity.' This is a serious loophole that, as I said before, ultimately makes a charade of the rest of the law. Now there is, already in process, a plan to turn all five 'Territorial Reserves' into 'Indigenous Reserves', thereby transforming them from supposedly 'intangible' to, well, tangible. Exploitable. Not, sadly, that this 'intangibility' has meant very much anyway in the case of the Kugapakori-Nahua-Nanti Reserve!"

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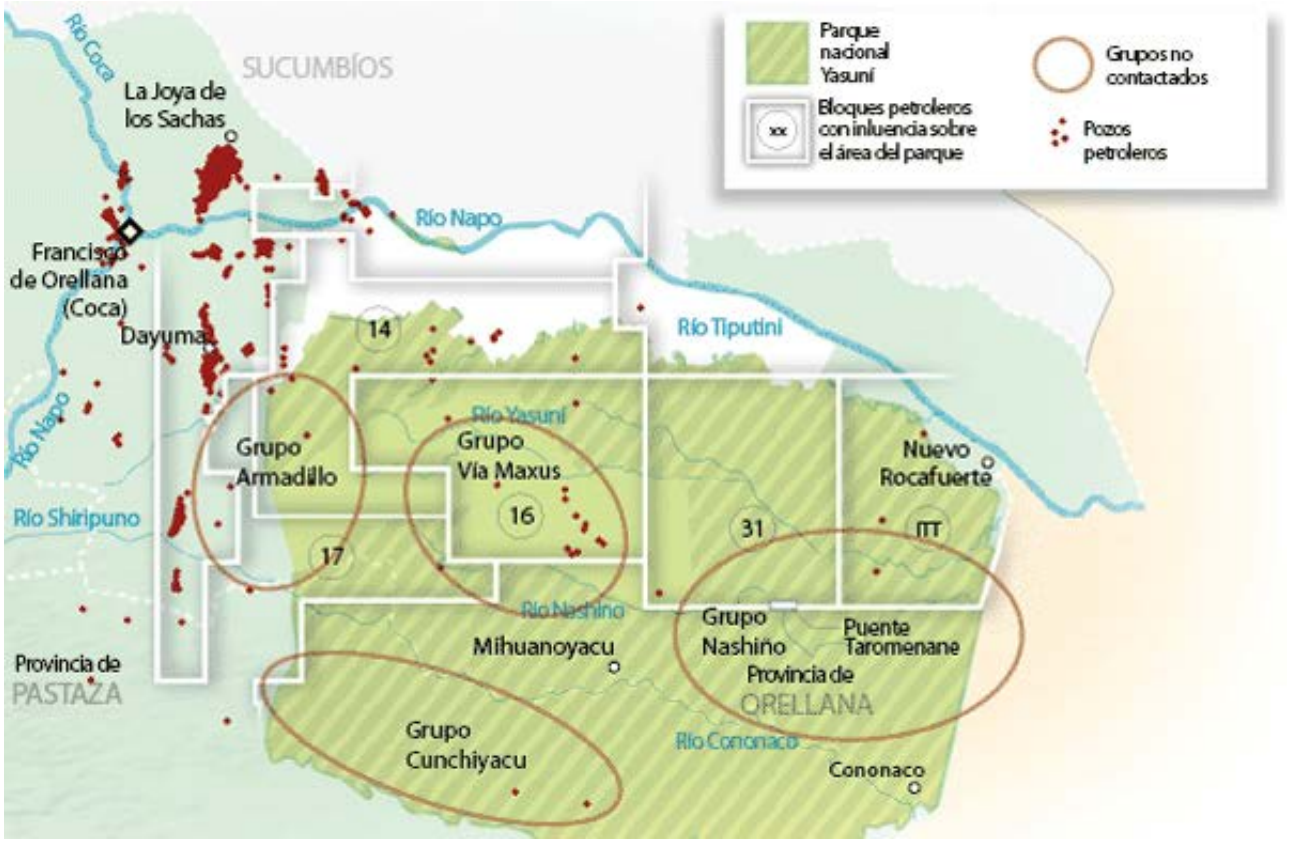
- Ecuador: The Tagaeri Taromenane Intangible Zone in Yasuní Park



In 1999, a presidential decree created the Tagaeri Taromenane “Intangible” or Untouchable Zone (ZITT) within Yasuní National Park. This meant that the area in question would be permanently off-limits for any extractive operations, including oil drilling. According to the decree, intangible zones are “protected areas of great cultural and biological importance in which no type of extractive activity can be carried out due to the high value they have for the Amazon region, Ecuador, the world, and present and future generations.”

The ZITT covers approximately 700,000 hectares in the southern area of the park, equivalent to the core of Yasuní National Park, and part of the territory of the Tagaeri and Taromenane, two indigenous groups that are sub-groups of the Huaorani people and live in the Ecuadorian Amazon region between the Yasuní and Curaray Rivers, sharing the territory with other Huaorani groups. As a reaction to the oil boom of the 1970s and the occupation of their territory by oil exploration blocks over the last 20 years, the Tagaeri-Taromenane sought out isolation deep in the rainforest, and the fact that they have recently become more visible is the result of the expansion of the oil drilling frontier towards the areas where they had found refuge.

The creation of the “intangible zone”, which might appear to be a protective measure, effectively left open the possibility of extractive operations in the rest of the park, and in fact this off-limits area inside Yasuní Park is bordered on every side by oil blocks.

It should be stressed that the delimitation of the intangible zone was not based on the territory actually occupied by the peoples living in isolation. Moreover, simply putting up warning signs is not enough to stop illegal incursions into the zone, nor does it safeguard the free movement of the peoples living in isolation. The scarcity of resources needed for their survival and environmental contamination – both caused by oil industry activity – are increasingly forcing these people to seek sustenance in other areas. This pressure on their territories has also contributed to the intensification of inter-ethnic conflicts.

A particular characteristic of the Tagaeiri and Taromenane in Yasuní Park is the

aggressiveness they have repeatedly demonstrated since the beginning of the oil boom towards the outside world and especially the intrusion of outsiders in their territory. However, although there are records of several attacks since the first arrival of oil companies in the area, the situation has worsened in recent years in line with the increased pressure on the territory of these peoples caused by illegal logging, legal oil industry activity, and the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

The conflicts generated are associated with the demographic and ideological characteristics of their social structure as hunters-gatherers-farmers culturally related to the Huaorani. These isolated groups are historically characterized by aggressive relations with "non-persons" – cowori in the Wao Tededo language – and war plays a central role in the maintenance of their identity as a group and their territory.

In view of these factors, it is very likely that the intrusion and presence of external agents in their territory could spark conflicts, confrontations and attacks.

The environmental organization Acción Ecológica maintains that the delimitation of the ZITT was defined "in complicity with the big transnationals that have oil concessions in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve. These companies have provided maps, information and infrastructure, as well as exerting considerable pressure." As a result, the borders of the zone reflect the interests of the oil companies and not the movement and settlement patterns of the Tagaeri and Taromenane peoples.

The "appearance" of peoples in voluntary isolation in the national legal framework is a challenge for the state. These peoples in isolation reflect the limits of the state's institutional and legal frameworks and the enormous debt owed by the state in terms of safeguarding their lives and culture.

Acción Ecológica stresses that "any programme for the protection of isolated peoples must necessarily include the prohibition of oil extraction in the area occupied by these peoples, and this should lead to a transition towards a new economic model, towards a post-petroleum Ecuador."

However, a recent decision adopted by the government is aimed in the opposite direction: the administration of President Rafael Correa has decided to abandon its proposal to leave the oil untapped in the pristine area known as Yasuni-ITT. On August 15, Correa announced that that Yasuní would be opened to oil exploration, which additionally represents an increase in threats to the isolated peoples who live there.

The decision sparked a wave of national and international protests, and the subsequent repression of young people who demonstrated their support for life and for Yasuní.

The international organization Oilwatch sent a letter to the president of Ecuador reminding him that "oil extraction is by no means a benign activity and the deep scars left by Texaco (Chevron) in the oil fields of Ecuador are a stark reminder."

Oilwatch supports the original initiative to leave the oil in Yasuní untapped and has called on the president and the National Assembly of Ecuador to respect and defend the rights of the peoples of Yasuní and the rights of nature. (See: http://www.oilwatch.org/en/home/130-several/campaigns/624-letter-oilwatch-protect-the-planet-keep-oil-companies-out-of-yasuni-itt)

This article is based on: “Ecuador: Critican decreto de zona intangible en Pque. Nacional Yasuni”, Nathalia Bonilla and José Proaño, Acción Ecológica, http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=44563 ; “La geografía imposible de la Zona Intangible Tagaeri Taromenane”, press release from Geoyasuni.org, http://www.geoyasuni.org/?page_id=830 ; and information provided by Alexandra Almeida, Acción Ecológica, e-mail: yasuni@accionecologica.org

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- Andaman Islands, India: Jarawa people turned into a “ tourist attraction”

Photo: Survival International

Another major threat looming over some groups of isolated indigenous peoples is mass tourism. In some cases, private operators and local guides organize flights over areas where these groups are known to live, for the entertainment of tourists.

On the Andaman Islands, “human safaris” are organized for visitors to take in a new tourist attraction: the Jarawa, a recently contacted tribe that has begun to relate with the outside world – although these relations take some very disturbing forms.

According to anthropologists, the Jarawa are descendants of some of the first humans to move out of Africa to other territories. They lead a simple life: the men hunt pigs and turtles with bows and arrows, and the women gather fruit and honey.

The Jarawa first began to venture out onto the roads and let themselves be seen in 1998. Two years earlier, a young member of the tribe, Enmai (see Stories of resistance in this edition) had broken his leg and was taken to a hospital, bringing back stories of the outside world upon his return. But this decision to break with their isolation has come at a high cost. As has been the case with numerous other previously uncontacted groups, they have succumbed to diseases to which they have developed no immunity: measles, mumps and even malaria. Some have adopted the vices of the outsiders: tobacco, alcohol and betel nuts (a mild stimulant).

Now the Jarawa tribe – made up of an estimated 403 members – lives on a reserve in the south of the Andaman Islands, which are located in the Bay of Bengal and belong to India. Although the Supreme Court of India ordered the closure of road that winds through the reserve in 2002, it remains open and attracts hundreds of tourist cars every day. At the entrance to the reserve, where the tourist cars line up, there are signs warning visitors of the rules: no pictures, no contact, nothing to disturb the tribe members, who are trusting, innocent and highly vulnerable to exploitation. There are police

officers present, supposedly to protect them.

A journalist from the UK newspaper The Guardian, who was there to observe the situation, reports that as soon as the gates to the reserve opened, tourists began taking pictures, as well as throwing bananas and biscuits to the Jarawa on the roadside, as if they were animals in a zoo. The Guardian exposé included a video of Jarawa girls dancing for the tourists, in which a police officer, supposedly there to take care of them, is seen ordering one of the girls to dance.

At the Vyas Brothers shop in Port Blair, capital of the Andaman Islands, Jarawa handicrafts and small wooden figurines were displayed for sale. The shop clerk laid out the price of a day out on "safari" with the Jarawa: 15,000 rupees (USD 240) to buy off the police – who are supposed to keep tourists away but do quite the opposite – and another 10,000-15,000 rupees for a car and a driver, and for the Jarawa… little gifts.

This situation led Survival, an organization that works in defence of tribal peoples' rights, to launch a campaign against these "human safaris". In January of this year, in what appeared to be a victory, the Supreme Court of India temporarily banned tourists from entering the road that crosses through the Jarawa reserve. But two months later, this ruling was overturned, undoubtedly due to pressure from tourism operators and other business interests.

In response, in April, Survival launched a tourism boycott of the Andaman Islands, which has drawn the support of thousands of people who have pledged that they will not visit the islands until these excursions are brought to an end, as well as travel agencies that have removed the Andamans from their lists of tourism destinations (see http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/9239).

Colonization continues, in different forms, with different faces, but one of its most disgraceful facets is that of actions which humiliate, degrade and exploit isolated peoples, who are becoming increasingly hemmed in.

This article is based on: "Andaman Islands tribe threatened by lure of mass tourism", Gethin Chamberlain, The Guardian, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/07/andaman-islands-tribe-tourism-threat; "Thousands join travel boycott of India's Andaman Islands", Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/9239

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- The Sentinelese– the world's most isolated tribe?

Photo: Survival International

Living on their own small island, only 72 km2, the Sentinelese are probably the most isolated tribe in

the world. They are thought to be directly descended from the first human populations to emerge from Africa, and have lived in the Andaman Islands for up to 55,000 years.
They attracted international attention after the 2004 Asian tsunami, when a member of the tribe was photographed firing arrows at a coastguard helicopter that was checking they were safe.

The tribe continues to resist all contact with outsiders, attacking anyone who comes near. In 2006, two Indian fishermen, who had moored their boat near North Sentinel to sleep after poaching in the waters around the island, were killed when their boat broke loose and drifted onto the shore. Poachers are known to fish illegally, catch turtles and dive for lobsters and sea cucumbers in the waters around the island.

Most of what is known about the Sentinelese has been gathered by viewing them from boats moored more than an arrow's distance from the shore andfrom a few brief periods where the Sentinelese allowed the authorities to get close enough to hand over some coconuts. The name 'Sentinelese' is not theirs, but comes from their island, named by the British who colonised the island archipelago in the 1850s. No one knows what they call themselves.

The Sentinelese hunt and gather in the forest, and fish in the coastal waters.They make narrow outrigger canoes. These can only be used in shallow waters as they are steered and propelled with a pole like a punt.

It is thought that the Sentinelese live in three small bands. They have two different types of houses; large communal huts with several hearths for a number of families, and more temporary shelters, with no sides, with space for one nuclear family.

No one knows how many Sentinelese there are – the official population is put at 39, but that figure is based on how many could be seen through binoculars when the census officials came close to the island. Officials have counted 91 people from a distance, but it's probable that the number is significantly higher than that.

The women wear fibre strings tied around their waists, necks and heads. The men also wear necklaces and headbands, but with a thicker waist belt, which may also act as armour. The men carry spears, bows and arrows.

From what can be seen from a distance, the Sentinelese islanders appear to be proud, strong and healthy and at any one time observers have noted many children and pregnant women. This is in marked contrast to the Great Andamanese tribes to whom the British attempted to bring 'civilization'. Contact and attempts to 'mainstream' themwere devastating. In 1800 the Great Andamanese's population was estimated to be more than 6,000,it is now only 53. The tribes were robbed of their lands and decimated by disease; they are now completely dependent on the government. Alcoholism and diseases such as TB are rife.

In 1879 the British led a large team to North Sentinel Island in the hope of contacting the Sentinelese. They found recently abandoned villages and paths but the Sentinelese were nowhere to be seen. After a few days they came across an elderly couple and some children who, 'in the interest of science' were taken to the islands' capital. Predictably they soon fell ill and the adults died. The children were taken back to their island with a number of gifts. It is not known how many Sentinelese became ill as a result of this 'science' but it's likely that the children would have passed on their diseases and the results would have been devastating

During the 1970s the Indian authorities made occasional trips to North Sentinel in an attempt to befriend the tribe, often for the amusement of dignitaries. On one of these trips two pigs and a doll were left on the beach. The Sentinelese speared the pigs and buried them, along with the doll. Such visits became more regular in the 1980s; the teams would try to land, at a place out of the reach of arrows, and leave gifts such as coconuts, bananas and bits of iron. Sometimes the Sentinelese seemed to make friendly gestures; at others they would take the gifts into the forest and fire arrows at the contact party.

In 1991 there appeared to be a breakthrough. When the officials arrived the tribe gestured for them to bring gifts and then, for the first time, approached without their weapons. They even waded into the sea towards the boat to collect more coconuts. However, this friendly contact was not to last, although gift dropping trips continued for some years, encounters were not always friendly. At times the Sentinelese aimed their arrows at the contact team and once they attacked a wooden boat with their adzes. The officials had not managed to get beyond handing out coconuts and now even this did not seem welcome. No one knows why the Sentinelese first dropped, and then resumed their hostility to the contact missions, nor if any died as a result of diseases caught during these visits.

In 1996 the regular gift dropping missions stopped. Many officials were beginning to question the wisdom of attempting to contact a people who were healthy and content and who had thrived on their own for up to 55,000 years. Friendly contact had had only a devastating impact on the Great Andamanese tribes. The Sentinelese's extreme isolation makes them very vulnerable to diseases to which they have no immunity; meaning contact would almost certainly have tragic consequences for them.

Following a campaign by Survival International and local organisations, the government's policy is nowthat no further attempts should be made to contact the tribe. Periodic checks, from boats anchored at a distance from shore, are made to ensure that the Sentinelese appear well and have not chosen to seek contact.

Article based on:: "Andaman Islands tribe threatened by lure of mass tourism", Gethin Chamberlain, The Guardian, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/07/andaman-islands-tribe-tourism-threat; "Miles de personas se unen al boicot de las islas Andamán de la India", Survival, http://www.survival.es/noticias/9244

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- Stories of resistance

Photo: uncontactedtribes.org

1. A view from the recently contacted Jarawa

The Jarawa, from India's Andaman Islands have only had friendly contact with settlers living near their forest since 1998. Their sudden appearance out of the forest without their bows and arrows, after more than a century of hostility, is widely credited to Enmai, a young Jarawa man. In 1996 Enmai spent six months in hospital after being found by settlers with a broken leg.

He told a Shailesh Shekhar from the Hindustan Times, 'In the early days, we were afraid of you people, …we would fear you…We had no idea about a world, about an existence beyond our jungle.'

Seven years after returning to his forest Enmai was critical of outsiders, 'They are bad men… They lure us to use us…Our standing on the roads and begging is not good. Drivers abuse us. All this is not good."

He no longer goes out of the forest except for medical help, saying, 'The jungle is better. Even if I have to stay outside for a few days, I would like to return to my family in the jungle.'

Source: Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/Jarawa

2. Before contact: on the run

An unknown number of Ayoreo Indians live isolated in the Paraguayan Chaco, the vast scrub forest that extends south of the Amazon basin. Parojnai [pronounced Pow-hai] Picanerai, his wife Ibore and their five children had been on the run for many years. The area of forest they called home had been getting smaller and less safe. Landowners were buying up their forest and sending in bulldozers to clear the land, in defiance of national and international law.

The constant incursions of outsiders meant Parojnai and his family constantly had to move camp. Each sudden move meant the loss of the crops they had planted, and often their precious possessions such as cooking pots and tools.

Parojnai: 'We heard the noise of the bulldozer. We had to run away immediately, but luckily we were able to take all our things.

'We spent the night up in the forest, but we had to get up before dawn because we were afraid, and as we were getting up we heard the noise of the bulldozer again.

'It started to come closer to us. My wife had to leave the fruit of the najnuñane (carob tree) which she had already picked. We had to leave some other things as well to run faster because of the bulldozer.
'We ran from one place to another. It looked like the bulldozer was following us. I had to leave my tools, my bow, my rope to run faster. At last, the bulldozer left in another direction. When I realised that the bulldozer had gone in another direction, I found a trunk with a beehive in it, and I took the honey.

'We thought that the bulldozer could see us. We had planted many crops in the garden [melon, beans, pumpkin and corn] because it was summer time. We thought that the bulldozer had seen our

garden and came to eat the fruit – and to eat us too. The bulldozer opened a path up right beside our garden, that's why we were so scared of it.

'We have always seen airplanes, but we did not know that it was something useful of the cojñone [white people, literally strange people]. We also saw long clouds behind the plane which frightened us, because we thought that something might fall on us. When we saw these big planes with this white smoke behind, we thought they were stars.'

Parojnai died of tuberculosis in 2008.

Source: Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/ayoreo

3. Contact: a personal story

Ayoreo-Totobiegosode woman Ibore from Paraguay tells how, on 11 June 1998, their family risked everything and made contact.

'We walked to a place where my husband Parojnai had sharpened a spear before. We stayed there, preparing our camp. After a while we heard the noise of a truck.

We went to get honey, because Parojnai had already found a tree with honey. Amajane [their eldest son] and I saw a bulldozer. We saw the bulldozer and we went near, no matter if the cojñone [white people, literally strange people] killed us, we did not care if they killed us.

There we saw a little house [this was actually a mobile trailer for a Paraguayan bulldozer-driver]. Amajane said to us, 'Stay here, while I go and find out what the cojñone are like, if it is possible to contact them'. At that time we had no knowledge of how the cojñone were. When he came back Amajane said to us, 'I saw some cojñone but I got scared and I could not go closer.'

Parojnai asked me if I was scared of the cojñone or not. I answered, 'I am not scared, I am going to get closer to them.

Berui [their second-eldest son] said: 'I'm going with you too.' But I said to Berui, 'I don't want you to come with us. If the cojñone kill us, you are going to look after your little brothers [Tocoi and Aripei] and live with them. Berui obeyed and he stayed with his little brothers. We went along the side of a road, towards the cojñone.

We spotted the house of the cojñone. When we got to the little house Parojnai shouted, 'I am Parojnai'. But it looked as if nobody was in the house. In that moment Amajane shouted also, 'My name is Amajane. I haven't come to kill you.'

Parojnai kept shouting, 'I am Parojnai', and suddenly a cojñoi came out and I saw what the cojñone are like; I saw that they are people like us. I told him again, 'We don't come to kill you, rather we want to live with you.'

The man said 'Eha, eha, eha' and I noticed that he was very scared. He kept moving his head and looking behind himself, it looked like he wanted to run. He stepped back and I said to him, 'There's no reason to run, we are not going to kill you, we are good people.'

Amajane made signs to him to come closer. When he came closer I hugged him with one arm and Parojnai hugged him on the other side, and I said to him, 'Sit here'. I said, 'Don't be afraid of us' and I shouted to Parojnai, 'You hold him too, we don't want him to leave again', and always with the same words I said to him, 'Don't be afraid, don't be afraid of us, we are good people'. The man kept repeating, 'Eha, Eha, Eha'.

I kept repeating to him 'Don't be afraid'. The cojñoi held something in his hand [a shotgun] and I asked Parojnai, 'What is it that he has in his hand?' and Parojnai answered, 'It's a weapon'. And I said to the cojñoi, 'Don't be afraid of us, bring us something to eat, we are hungry'. The cojñoi went into the little house and brought a plate full of biscuits and he ate the biscuits in front of us. I tried too, but I did not like them.

The man passed the biscuits around and laughed, 'hi, hi, hi', and he brought some stew on another plate. Just like the biscuits, he ate it in front of us, I also tried it, and I didn't like it.

Parojnai said, 'Bring us water, I'm thirsty, I want to drink water'. We saw a bucket and there was water inside and we drank. Amajane arrived just when we had already found water from the cojñoi. Amajane was afraid of the water and poured it out. I said to him, 'You should not pour out the water.'

The cojnoi went into his little house and brought out a weapon. Amajane and his father stayed beside this man for the whole time, they followed him step by step. Suddenly, he shot in the air.

I got scared, thinking that he was shooting at my son and my husband. And I shouted, 'Heeee' out of fear, and suddenly the man took off his shirt and he passed me his shirt, laughing. And then I went to give him a necklace of purucode [black seeds] and I put it around his neck. Parojnai also brought out a necklace of purucode and he also put it around his neck.

In photos taken the next day, Ibore can be seen wearing the man's red football shirt.
Ibore and her children now live in a small Ayoreo community on the edge of the forest. Parojnai contracted flu and tuberculosis soon after contact, and died of tuberculosis in 2008.

Source: Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/ayoreo

4. The 'Last of his Tribe'

It is believed that this lone man is the last survivor of his people, who were probably massacred by cattle ranchers occupying the region of Tanaru in Rondônia state, similar to that of his near neighbours, the last five surviving Akuntsu. When they were first contacted in 1995, they told how their people were massacred at the hands of ranchers' gunmen, who bulldozed their huts into oblivion and shot those who tried escape.

The man lives on his own and is constantly on the run. We do not know his name, what tribe he belongs to or what language he speaks.

He is sometimes known only as 'the Man of the Hole' because of the big holes he digs either to trap animals or to hide in.

He totally rejects any type of contact.

Brazil's indigenous affairs department has formally recognized a small patch of rainforest for his protection. This is entirely surrounded by cattle ranchers.

Source: Survival, ww.survivalinternational.org/tribes/uncontacted-brazil

5. Karapiru Awá, Maranhão, Brazil

as told to Survival, 2000

Most of those Awá who have been contacted - and many who have not - are the survivors of brutal massacres, which have left them mentally and physically scarred. One such survivor is Karapiru, whose incredible story illustrates the resilience of the Awá people. He spent about 10 years alone on the run, and eventually established friendly contact with villagers in Bahia. He had travelled some 1,000 kms from his home. Much later he was reunited with his son, Tiramucum, who had survived the massacre.

'At the time of the massacre, I was the only survivor of the family – I hid in the forest, and escaped from the karaí [non-Indians]. They killed my mother, my brothers and sisters and my wife. I lived, always managing to escape from the ranchers. I walked a long, long way, always hiding in the forest. I was very hungry and it was very hard to survive. I ate small birds; later, when I travelled far from the place where the massacre happened, I began to take animals from the white people here or there, but I would then always flee. I ate honey. I found a machete, and I would always carry that with me – it was a weapon and also helped me get the honey.

'When I was shot during the massacre, I suffered a great deal because I couldn't put any medicine on my back. I couldn't see the wound: it was amazing that I escaped – it was through the Tupã [spirit]. I spent days wandering around in pain, with the lead shot in my back, bleeding. I don't know how it didn't get full of insects. But I managed to escape from the whites.

'I spent a long time in the forest, hungry and being chased by ranchers. I was always running away, on my own. I had no family to help me, to talk to. So I went deeper and deeper into the forest. Today I couldn't tell you where I went. It was very sad and there are times when I don't like to remember all that happened to me, that time I spent in the forest. I feel good here with the other Awá. And I have found my son after many years.

'I hope when my daughter grows up she won't face any of the difficulties I've had. I hope everything will be better for her. I hope the same things that happened to me won't happen to her. I hope she will grow up very healthy. I hope it won't be like in my time.'

Source: Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/awa

6. A view from Wamaxuá Awá, Maranhão state, Brazil

as told to Survival in 2010

Wamaxuá is an Awá man who with his mother and several other Awá, was contacted by a group of contacted Awá. He and his mother now live in an Awá community. The other Awá decided to return to their nomadic life in the forest.

'Some Awá used to see us in the forest. They must have asked themselves: where do they live? Some of them went looking and found our house in the forest.

I grew up in the forest. I often went out alone to hunt.

The karaí [non-Indians] have been in the forest for a while, cutting down trees. We used to walk in the forest and see that they had passed. The first time I saw them, I was still little. My father was still alive. He was very scared of the non-Indians

Three Awá who came with me [at the time of contact with other contacted Awá] went back to live in the forest. They stayed here for a while. They performed the ritual, and slept here for some days but they did not want to stay.

There are still Awá living in the forest. They live fleeing from the non-Indians. They find their tracks and they escape from them, scared.

They break babaçu coconut and cut trees quietly, so noone notices they are there. They hunt monkey and other game at night time, hidden.

Sometimes they are hungry during the day time. I know because I have lived in the forest. Before coming here, I went through all that in the forest. Just like I used to do, they must still be hiding, living on the run.

The non-Indians are still in the forest! What will happen to them? The non-Indians are taking too long to leave, they have been moving around for a long time. Unfortunately, they are still destroying the forest. It's tragic! I'm very worried.

What will become of them, my brothers who still live there? They'll probably continue to escape. We were scared of the loggers when we lived in the forest, and still now, living here, I fear their presence. They are going to destroy our forest.'

Source: Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/awa

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RECOMMENDED

- " Rocky Road. How legal failings and vested interests behind Peru's Purús highway threaten the Amazon and its people", Global Witness, May 2013, http://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/library/RockyRoad_GlobalWitness_lo.pdf

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- " There you go!", by Oren Ginzburg, Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/thereyougo . An animation video of the book is being produced and is expected to be launched in a few months time.

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- " Progress Can Kill: How imposed development destroys the health of tribal peoples", Survival, http://www.survivalinternational.org/progresscankill

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- “ Tribal People for Tomorrow's World” , Stephen Corry, http://shop.survivalinternational.org/products/tribal-peoples-for-tomorrow's-world

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- “ Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento Voluntario y Contacto Inicial” , Dinah Shelton, Antenor Vaz, Beatriz Huertas Castillo, Carlos Camacho Nassar, Luis Jesús Bello, Paola Colleoni, José Proaño, Dany Mahecha R. (ed.), Carlos Eduardo Franky C. (ed.) y la Unión de Nativos Ayoreo de Paraguay e Iniciativa Amotodie, Grupo Internacional de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas, IWGIA y el Instituto de Promoción Estudios Sociales, IPES – 2012, http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0603_aislados_contacto_inicial.pdf

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