



## *Seringueiros of Machadinho d'Oeste*



***The seringueiros of Machadinho d'Oeste are being threatened, even killed, because they courageously defend their way of life, which depends on and is in harmony with their environment. They are in urgent need of protection.***

— Anne Catherine Kennedy,  
Development and Peace –  
Caritas Canada Program Officer  
for Latin America



The *seringueiros* are traditional artisanal rubber tappers. By state-recognized right, a group of them practice sustainable hunting, gathering, fishing and rubber tapping on 16 reserves in the Machadinho d'Oeste municipality of Brazil's Rondônia State.

### **Threatened lifestyles, threatened lives**

The traditional, forest-friendly *seringueiro* lifestyle is in peril. Large logging companies are:

- Intimidating and evicting *seringueiros* from their lands
- Deploying tactics like kidnapping, arson and murder to silence resistance
- Bribing officials to bypass protective laws
- Enabling the takeover of forested land by industrial agriculture and livestock farming

The problem is not new. In 1988, *seringueiro* leader Chico Mendes had been killed by a rancher. Lately, 15 *seringueiros* have been murdered in Machadinho d'Oeste. The recent arrest of some corrupt officials for issuing illegal logging permits has not deterred the aggressive expansion of logging. And now, the Brazilian government is opening the Amazon's protected areas, including *seringueiro* reserves, to resource extraction.

### **Bleak prospects**

Benefitting from media and government inattention, the logging firms are driving the *seringueiros* further inland, away from the sustenance of the Machadinho River. This is exacerbating their already precarious economic condition.

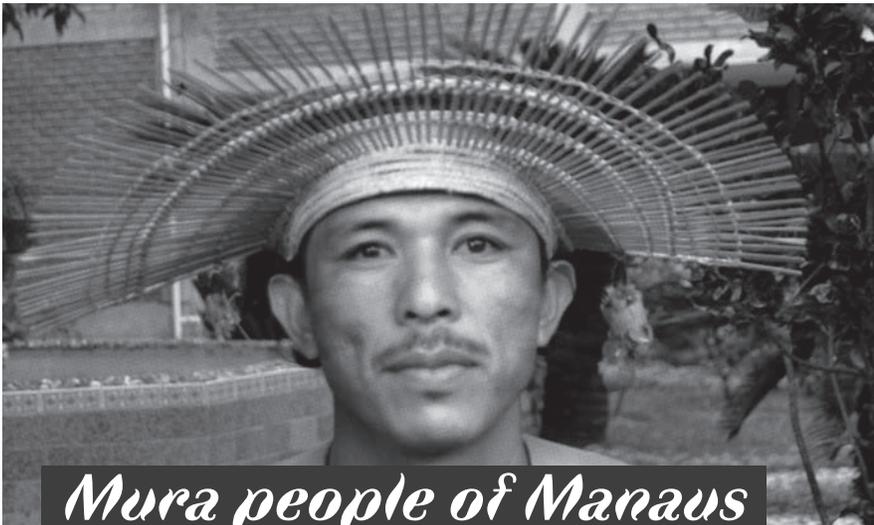
### **How the Pastoral Land Commission is helping**

Our long-time partner, Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT, the Pastoral Land Commission), is an arm of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil. It supports the *seringueiros* by documenting abuses of their rights and helping them challenge unjust land distribution and seizures. CPT also promotes human rights, ecological justice and genuine land reform.

### **What you can do**

Although Brazilian state policy is menacing their livelihood, the *seringueiros* are bravely fighting on with the help of CPT. In addition to encouraging and empowering them, by signing our Solidarity Letter you will help us advocate for Canada and Brazil to protect the forest and its people.

[devp.org/ForOurCommonHome](http://devp.org/ForOurCommonHome)



*We take from the forest only what is necessary for our survival. In my opinion, there is no one who can take care of the forest better than Indigenous people can.*

— Jeremias Oliveira,  
Mura representative

The Mura Indigenous people, who subsist as hunters, fishers and gatherers, have a proud history of resisting colonialism. They live in 38 villages around Manaus, the capital of Brazil's Amazonas State.

#### **A mine of misery**

The Muras' lands, livelihoods and lifestyle are threatened by a large potash mine that is being built by Potássio do Brasil, a resource company that has financing from a Toronto-based investment fund. The project will result in:

- Large-scale land appropriation and expulsion of Mura people
- Widespread pollution and deforestation
- Impoverishment of the Mura people

Contrary to its claims, the mining company has not meaningfully consulted the Mura, resorting instead to obfuscation, misrepresentations and bribery. Those among the Mura people who refuse to be coopted and dare to resist are criminalized and persecuted.

#### **Rapid scale-up, small victory**

Exploratory drilling for the mine began in 2010 and permits were granted in 2015. By 2017, the company had invested \$180 million of a planned outlay of \$2 billion. Recently, the Mura won an interim injunction against the mine on the grounds of insufficient consultation. But this is unlikely to last because the mine is backed by powerful vested interests.

#### **How the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network is helping**

Our partner, Rede Eclesial Pan-Amazônica (REPAM, the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network) is a church network supported by the Latin American Bishops' Conference. In the nine countries of the Amazon, it promotes human rights, helps marginalized communities resist injustice and draws global attention to the deteriorating condition of the Amazon and its Indigenous peoples.

#### **What you can do**

By signing our Solidarity Letter you will provide moral support to the Mura people in their legal fight, aided by REPAM. It will also help us advocate for better corporate accountability in Canada and better protection for the rainforest and its people in Brazil.



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