



## OPEN LETTER

### **Imminent risk**

#### **Funai's Isolated Indigenous Coordinator must have experience in the field**

Indigenistas Associados (INA), association of civil servants from the Brazilian Public Foundation for Indigenous People - Funai, comes out publicly to express the profound technical incompatibility and the risk of irreparable damage due to the appointment of a professional with missionary experience contrary to the objectives of the Coordination of Isolated and Recent Contact Indigenous (CGIIRC) and Funai itself, as reported nationally and internationally since January 31st.

CGIIRC is responsible, at Funai, for coordinating policies and actions for the protection of isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples, aiming to guarantee the full exercise of their freedom and their traditional activities without the necessary obligation to contact them. Studies on the location and monitoring of isolated indigenous peoples follow specific guidelines, supported by the Federal Constitution and the Policy for Isolated Indigenous, in line with international conventions and treaties. According to Funai data, there are about 107 records of the presence of isolated indigenous peoples in Brazil. Funai considers isolated "the indigenous groups that have not established permanent contact with the national population, differentiating themselves from the indigenous peoples that maintain long-standing and intense contact with non-indigenous". Their autonomous decision to isolate is recognized and must be protected.

Contradictorily, according to news reports, Ricardo Lopes Dias served for years as a professional missionary for the Brazilian branch of the American NGO New Tribes Mission, which aims, as described by the nominee in his dissertation, "the planting of an indigenous native church in each ethnicity".

Although trained in anthropology and theology, the professional experience of the nominee is contrary to article 231 of the Brazilian Constitution, which states that "the social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions are recognized to the indigenous peoples, and the original rights over the lands that they traditionally occupy". The project of planting a church in each ethnic group is antagonistic to the recognition of the diversity of peoples and cultures, when the aim is, in a planned and systematic way, to drastically alter such cultures.

Professional incompatibility here is notorious. Devoid of any experience in indigenous policy, this new appointment at Funai represents yet another act against indigenous rights. The nominee's professional background represents a double risk to isolated and recently contacted peoples, groups of extreme physical and social vulnerability, either because of his complete inability in a highly sensitive and complex issue, or because of his historical connection with international missionary NGOs. It is due to the extreme vulnerability of these peoples that the position in question, until now, has been occupied only by experienced professionals. Amateurism and experimentation like this can quickly cause irreparable damage for isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples, with the risk of genocide and traumatic changes in their social and cultural organization.



Indigenistas Associados joins other manifestations to highlight the incompatibility of appointing a professional with such a profile of planned religious interference to the position of policy coordinator for isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples. We also reiterate and support the public letter of Funai's officials responsible for the policy of isolated and recently contacted indigenous peoples ("[Carta Aberta dos servidores da Funai responsáveis pela política de povos indígenas isolados e de recente contato](#)"). This letter emphasizes that religious proselytism and missionary activity, when disturbing the religious practices of indigenous peoples, are configured as crimes against customs, aggravated when in communities of isolated indigenous peoples or of recent contact (Art. 231 of the Constitution and Art. 58 and 59 of Law N° 6.001/73).

It is necessary for the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to assess the technical incompatibility and the risk to indigenous lives caused by such an appointment, and it is incumbent on Minister Sérgio Moro not to endorse criminal practices against indigenous peoples in Brazil, whom he must protect.

INDIGENISTAS ASSOCIADOS

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