



# HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN 2020



They shall cut down her forest,  
though it is impenetrable.

Jeremiah 46:23



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## INTRODUCTION

# »THEY SHALL CUT DOWN HER FOREST« For human rights of indigenous peoples

### West Papua – Threatened forest – Threatened people

I first travelled to West Papua in 1998, when it was a province in the east of Indonesia. At that time there were about two million people living in West Papua, whose land area is larger than Germany. Even then, the almost inexhaustible resources of copper, gold, forests, and land were the target of international corporations, loggers, palm oil producers, and land speculators. Millions of traders, small farmers, and settlers have since moved to West Papua from other regions on the main islands of Indonesia, some of them densely populated, to seek good fortune and prosperity. The Papuans are now a minority there. They have lost their land, the forests that they lived in, to investors and immigrants, and with it their habitat, identity, culture, and food security. They experience discrimination and violence from the new arrivals, as well as from the police and the military who would guarantee their security.

When I visited the UEM member church in Papua in April 2018 and February 2019, it was obvious how much the destruction of nature through the establishment of plantations in the rainforest has facilitated the destruction of the Papuans' living space. The giant boundaries of newly established plantations can be seen from the air, as if drawn with a ruler in the middle of the forest. The bald patches continue expanding year upon year, like cancerous growths. Monocultures such as oil palms replace the forests, producing oil

- ▶ The giant boundaries of newly established plantations can be seen from the air, as if drawn with a ruler in the middle of the forest. The bald patches continue expanding year upon year, like cancerous growths.



## INTRODUCTION

to meet the global demand from the food, cosmetics, and biofuel industries. Major projects such as the construction of deep-sea ports form the basis for the rapid removal of raw materials, the influx of new settlers, and the exploitation of the last habitats of plants, animals, and indigenous Papuans not yet irretrievably destroyed by human hands. Against this background, the UEM has decided that this year's human rights campaign will bring awareness to the threatened and violated rights of indigenous peoples..

### »They shall cut down her forest« Without roots, we die

The verse from Jeremiah 46:23 is a threat to Egypt. »They shall cut down her forest, though it is impenetrable.« Like masses of locusts that cannot be counted, they will carry out their work of annihilation. In this depiction the land, forests, and life are inseparably linked. Without forests, life dies, humanity dies: the Papuans in Indonesia, the Lumads in the Philippines, the Pygmies in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They will be cut off from their roots, along with the land from which they are being expelled and the forests that are being cut down. They are losing their livelihoods.

But they are not the only ones. The wildfires in the Amazon this past summer have shown us that as climate change advances, we too are in danger of irreparably destroying the foundations of human life at the expense of others and our children. The slow but seemingly inexorable advance of the destruction of the rainforests and the livelihoods of indigenous people is not new. It is regrettable that only when everything is literally ablaze does the public take notice. On television and in newspapers, indigenous people are getting the chance to report on their fate and their privation. It is to be hoped that governments will take real action to stop this destruction not only in the Amazon, but in many other places, and to protect the rights of the last indigenous peoples on this planet.

The judgment against Egypt points to ourselves. There it's the locusts; here in Germany it's the bark beetle, which destroys entire tree populations and is a harbinger of worse things that may be yet to come.

### Collective action – Safeguarding the rights of nature and of indigenous peoples

In June 2019, the United Evangelical Mission together with the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World, the Evangelical Church in Germany, and the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany organised an international conference on the topic of sustainability and the integrity of creation. In their closing declaration, the participants issued a call to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and advocated for granting internationally recognized legal standing to nature itself. This would protect the forests, soil, air, and water, and preserve endangered plant and animal species from disappearing.

The UEM works closely in various networks with the World Council of Churches to protect the climate and the rights of indigenous peoples. We are grateful to be publishing contributions in these pages from women in these networks – from the Pacific and from Latin America.

»About 300 million people, made up of local communities and indigenous peoples, traditionally live in forests and primarily depend on them for their livelihoods. Customary lands of indigenous peoples and local communities encompass 65% of the world's land area, and 80% of the global biodiversity. Nearly all forests across the globe are inhabited.«

Forest Peoples Programme



- A section of illegally cleared forest, on which workers and new settlers build their houses.

The communion of UEM churches promotes projects by and for indigenous peoples, their rights, and the protection of their habitats. In the West Papua Network and the International Coalition for Papua (ICP), we support Papuans who have been victims of discrimination and human rights violations.

The United Evangelical Mission supports victims of human rights violations and requests your help for this work. Related to this campaign, we are supporting projects of the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA). The church would especially like to reach people who are discriminated against and live on the margins of society, such as the Pygmies. The UEM also funds projects from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), a church that supports indigenous Lumad communities in the Philippines. ■



Dr Jochen Motte,  
UEM Management Team

Your  
donation  
helps!

PROJECTS

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

## Supporting the rights of indigenous Pygmy peoples

### For a peaceful coexistence of communities

**Who are the Pygmies? What are their greatest challenges, and what are their living conditions like?**

#### About the Pygmies

The Pygmies are one of the ethnic minorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They are considered the first inhabitants of the DRC. In the past this nomadic people lived only from hunting, fishing, and gathering forest products. Today the social changes and their socio-economic consequences are affecting the everyday life of the Pygmies and forcing them into a sedentary life against their will. They are also being compelled to pursue agriculture and to coexist with other communities in their living space. This coexistence is not without its problems.

#### The biggest challenges for the indigenous Pygmy peoples supported in JPIC work

As a large country in the middle of Central Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo has substantial development potential available, because of both its area and population and its natural resources. Unfortunately, the indigenous peoples are the first victims of the country's development and its insecurity in rural areas; this is especially true for the population groups championed by the Commission for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC).

In fact, urbanization in Pygmy territories is one of the greatest threats they face. Day by day, the former preserve of these indigenous peoples is being divided into individual parcels of land, in complete defiance of the legal provisions over land inhabited by indigenous peoples. This urbanization naturally leads to a gradual destruction of the Pygmies' living environment. We need only mention the deforestation in the area around the city of Beni, which has resulted in there being little left of the game and fruit that make up the main foods of the Pygmies. Deforestation has also caused other environmental problems such as climate change, air pollution in cities, erosion, and landslides. Mining and cacao cultivation have led to the plundering of Pygmy territory. Also worthy of mention is that indigenous peoples are victims of the insecurity spread by militias. Their lives and their integration into society are strongly impaired because they are forced to flee deeper into the forest and thus surrender to their fate.

Moreover, it is deplorable that the Congolese state is neither deliberately pursuing the situation of the Pygmies nor has set up basic structures for their care. This situation has created negative consequences for the existence of this people that include a very high infant and maternal mortality rate, increasing poverty, and rampant illiteracy.

»A Pygmy loves the forest as she loves her own body.«

Mbendjele saying  
Source: Survival International



▲ In the Pygmy village of Tandandale (North Kivu Province)

In addition, Pygmy women are very often victims of sexual assault. A survey we conducted among Pygmy girls at Camp Senga revealed that more than 78 per cent of girls between 13 and 16 years of age had already given birth to at least one child and that more than 60 per cent of these children do not know their fathers. Some Bantu men resort to tricks to coerce these Pygmy girls to fall pregnant: they make them promises of marriage that are impossible to keep.

The forests that are the natural habitat of the Pygmies are spurring greed among the affluent, who want the arable land for their own commercial cultivation (cinchona bark tree, cacao, etc.) and thus would deprive the indigenous peoples of their living space. This situation is likely to lead to open or latent land conflicts, either among the Pygmies themselves or between them and other ethnic communities. In view of the violent clashes between the Bantu and the Pygmies in Katanga Province, one may wonder if the conflicts have not already begun.

Since 2014, the JPIC department has been working on a special programme to protect the Pygmies. This programme includes a number of activities: education

about fundamental rights, legal advice and assistance in court, and training in advocacy and peaceful conflict resolution.

Now that the DRC is on the road to stabilization, like other Central African states, all efforts should be geared towards establishing peace. In fact, all campaigns and stakeholder actions should support this objective and thus strengthen harmony, solidarity, and coexistence. The fate of indigenous peoples and their needs must receive the attention of the entire national and international community, especially against the background of the peace effort.

The nomadic life of previous generations of Pygmies and their forebears was not a problem for them, but today the situation is different. The people have begun to take a new perspective in reacting to the realities of a social life that is constantly in transition and characterized by increasingly complex changes. A young Pygmy whom JPIC employees met at Camp Senga did not mince words: »In history it was undisputed that we Pygmies were the first inhabitants; today we have become a people without land. If that is the case, we will sharpen our spears and our arrows to

▶ In this seminar, Pygmies are informed about their rights and other issues.



▶ The village pastor of the Baptist Church (CBCA) in Tandandale (North Kivu Province)



▶ Pygmy girls are often victims of sexual assault.

kill the intruders.« This is why we appeal to all peace activists to seek out opportunities for the Pygmy people to claim their promised rights peacefully, so that lasting peace may prevail through the peaceful coexistence of the communities living in this part of the DRC.

The statement of the young Pygmy expresses not only sorrow, but also a desire to rebel alongside those who are excluded and feel they have been deprived of their land. Through the work of the JPIC department, the Pygmy community has become acquainted with its rights as an indigenous people. This also helps to prevent violence that could arise from the ignorance of these rights.

Another Pygmy, Romain S., who understands his rights and knows that a peaceful coexistence with other communities is necessary, explained: »We have been threatened by other communities. We were about to reach for our spears to seek revenge. But thanks to this training and our advocacy work, we understand that there are mechanisms to protect our rights as Pygmies and as citizens by peaceful means.« ■



Christian K. Sondirya



Jacques N. Birikunzira



Donald K. Kasyenene

## PHILIPPINES

## Challenges and hopes

Building a bridge for indigenous minorities  
in the diaspora

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As a church we have always had the duty to be shepherds for the poor and disadvantaged. Because we want to carry out this task faithfully, in 2015 we opened the

doors of the Haran Mission Centre of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) for displaced Lumads, also known as Bakwits. Some seven hundred Lumads had fled their villages in the face of massive militarization. Haran has since become a second home for these Lumad sisters and brothers. They have the time there to recover from the trauma they were left with after the attacks by paramilitary units on their ancestral territory, and their children can continue their schooling through the Bakwit School.

Like all other advocates for indigenous peoples, we were happy about the milestone reached in 2007 – the signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It was the result of a strong political movement by the indigenous minorities in this world to change their lives and liberate themselves from the grave injustice that has been systematically inflicted upon them over the course of history.

However, despite this milestone, there are still many indigenous peoples like the Lumads on the Philippine island of Mindanao who are suffering under prejudice, exclusion, and exploitation, as well as social, economic, and political injustice. In Mindanao, where the Philippine government has declared martial law, the Lumads are victims of extrajudicial executions, bombings on the civilian population, and forced evacuations.

Since President Rodrigo Duterte took office, at least 54 indigenous Lumads have been killed for defending

their ancestral lands – against large-scale mining, plantations, power plants, and extractive industry. One of the most startling cases was the murder of eight T'boli and Dulangan Manobo on 3 December 2017 at Lake Sebu.

This wave of atrocities against the Lumad people has given the global human rights community cause to appeal to the Philippine government. In December 2017, the two UN experts Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, and Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, sent this sharply worded declaration:

»The very culture and ways of life of indigenous peoples are intimately entwined with their ancestral lands and environments. Forcing indigenous peoples to leave their homes has an incalculable impact on their very lives and ways of living – one that risks erasing their culture and existence from the heritage of the Philippines, eventually forever.

Thousands of Lumads have already been forcibly displaced by the conflict and have seen their houses and livelihoods destroyed. They are suffering massive abuses of their human rights, some of which are potentially irreversible. We fear the situation could deteriorate further if the extension of martial law until the end of 2018 results in even greater militarization.«



▲ Lumad children can continue their schooling through the Bakwit School.

In a climate of impunity that has alarmed the global community of activists on indigenous rights and human rights, the military forces and paramilitary recruitments clearly targeting Lumad communities have increased all the more with this extension of martial law.

At the beginning of 2018, at least four thousand indigenous people from different parts of Mindanao were displaced anew. Now that they have once again lost their homes and livelihoods, they are struggling with the hardships, privation, and diseases that are a daily part of life in the temporary evacuation centres.

Even as the evacuated Lumads must cope with the uncertainty of whether they will ever be able to return to their ancestral lands or recover the peace they once lived under, the government has shifted to criminalizing their evacuation.

The government is not prepared to assume responsibility or pay compensation for the damage caused by the militarization and the rebel operations, and is denying the most basic humanitarian aid to the internally displaced Lumads.

## PROJECTS

This is why the aforementioned UN Special Rapporteurs have stated with regard to the plight of the internally displaced Lumads:

»The humanitarian needs of displaced indigenous peoples must be fully satisfied. It is paramount to implement solutions that allow the distributed Lumads to return to their ancestral lands with guarantees of safety, dignity and protection.

We urge the Philippines to observe its obligations under international law to protect the human rights of indigenous peoples, including in the context of armed conflict. The authorities must ensure that all human rights abuses are halted and that there is justice and accountability for past attacks. This includes killings and attacks allegedly carried out by members of the armed forces against the indigenous communities.«

One positive development in the UNHRC is the adoption of a resolution on 11 July 2019, introduced by Iceland, that instructs UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet to develop a comprehensive report on the human rights situation in the Philippines. After a corresponding investigation, the UN High Commissioner will present this comprehensive report at the 44th meeting in June 2020.

As for the UCCP, the Episcopal Council is voicing its full support for the Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area church district, while at the same time the bishops are firmly committing themselves to helping indigenous peoples, especially in their catchment area through work at the Haran Mission Centre. The centre has offered the Lumads a home for many years now. Leaving their ancestral lands is the hardest thing they ever did, they tell us. But violence and attacks by paramilitary groups forced them to do so. They see the Haran UCCP centre as a place of healing for Lumads traumatized by harassment and violence. In addition, the centre offers their children the opportunity to go to school. Above all, however, the Haran Centre is a place of peace that builds a bridge between the horrors of their violent expulsion from their resource-rich ancestral lands, and their awareness of God's promise:

»For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.«

*Psalm 72:12–14*

Marma C. Urbano, Pastor



▲ Temporary evacuation centre: Here the Lumads get food, clothing, and medicine, among other things.



## INFORMATION

# »WE ARE THE BEST ADMINISTRATORS OF THE FOREST«

## Why we urgently need indigenous peoples to protect the forest

**F** Forests cover about one third of the earth's surface. They are of manifold and central importance for human beings, for biological diversity, and for climate protection.

The inhabitants of the forest have used it differently in different countries. Most of them have conceived rules on how to use the forest while preserving its utility unscathed for future generations. Today we talk about the importance of forests in relation to the global water supply and the avoidance of natural disasters, droughts, and floods. We also see them as carbon sinks and as a regulating medium for the climate.

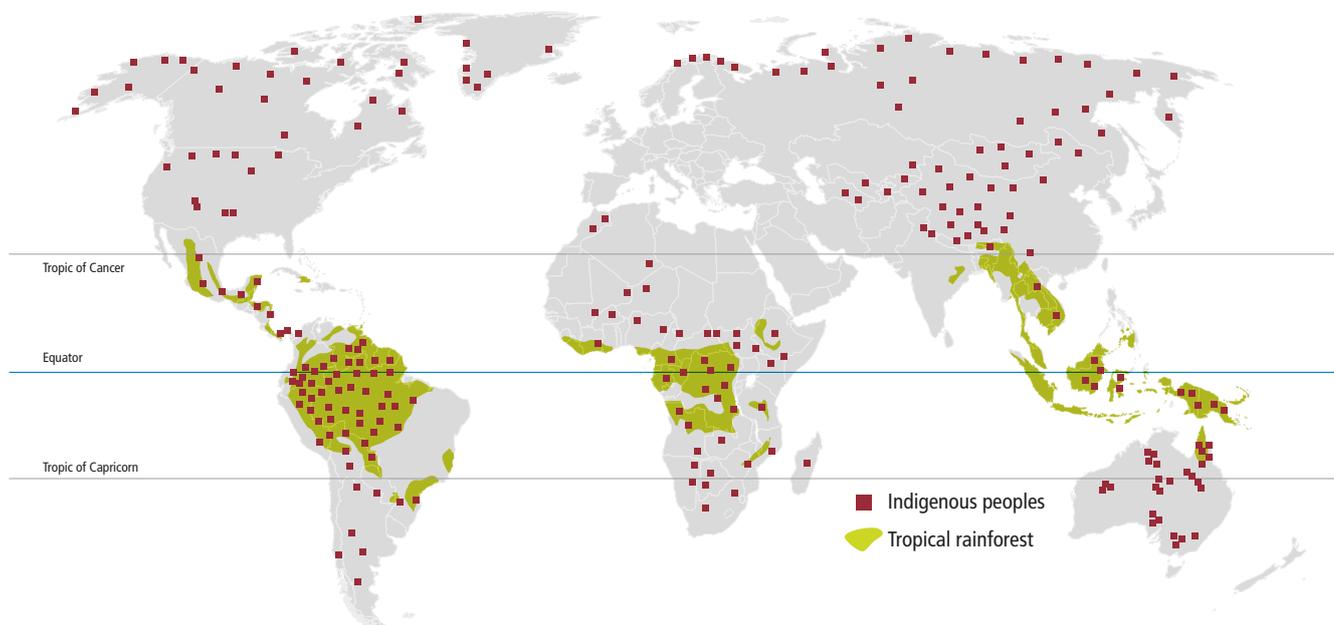
Even with the knowledge of these vital functions, tropical rainforests in South America are being cut down for the cultivation of genetically modified soya, large-scale cattle farming, and paper production. The tropical rainforest is also used for the cultivation of sugar cane (South America), oil palms (Malaysia and Indonesia) and plants for agrofuels.

The rainforest in the Democratic Republic of Congo has the world's largest deposits of coltan, a crude ore for the production of mobile phones and computers. So here is one key question: How do we maintain the biological and climate-related richness of the forests?

### The basics on indigenous peoples and the forest

Indigenous peoples make up approximately 5 per cent of the global population; the United Nations estimates that there are 370 to 450 million of them. According to the World Bank, their territories include about 80 per cent of the world's biological diversity, which they have used for centuries while still preserving it.<sup>1</sup> If we combined maps of the areas of indigenous settlement in the world with maps of large, contiguous woodland areas, the result would be an astonishing overlap between the two (see diagram).

OroVerde [www.regenwald-schuetzen.de/english](http://www.regenwald-schuetzen.de/english)



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The descendants of the indigenous communities in the Xingú region in central west Brazil live on what are practically green islands surrounded by monocultures. The indigenous inhabitants there not only maintain their traditions, but have also simultaneously developed business activities and trading in wood and hunting quarry. Clearly, it's not a lack of efficient tools that's preventing greater ecological damage. Sustainable use of the forest does not come from an ignorance of technology. Do indigenous peoples know secrets about preserving the forest that we don't?

Yes and no. The vast majority of technical skills for the sustainable use of forests are also part of our traditional forest management – »mixed forest« is a key term here. But the myriad local knowledge of small-scale forest use is slipping away amid commercial exploitation, where profit is expected to be extracted as quickly and continuously as possible from tree plantings. The latter is not compatible with slow-growing tree

species or those which require a high amount of manual labour. Indigenous peoples face similar challenges, yet most of them draw different conclusions from such situations than do commercial foresters. Why?

A substantial aspect is that for many indigenous peoples, forests have always had a religious or spiritual significance and are respected in a similar way to living beings. Indigenous peoples have a different relationship to forests and trees, because they consider them the seat of gods, spirits, and ancestors and revere them as such. Nature as subject also occurs in Hinduism and Buddhism. Christian communities also undergo a cognitive process that gives them a stronger awareness of humanity's duty to creation and references the tradition of Francis of Assisi, among others. In contrast to indigenous peoples, however, there is no talk of »ensouled nature«, nor is there a fundamental role for the simultaneous, deliberate shaping of the environment or for a community process to stabilize this approach.



▲ A large part of the indigenous population lives in the remote areas of West Papua.

»Experts are finally waking up to the fact that upholding indigenous peoples' right to remain on their land is the best way to guarantee forest conservation. It's a shame that not all conservation organizations have caught on. Aside from the human rights violation that their evictions represent, such action is also counterproductive.«

Stephen Corry, Director of Survival International

To forestall any romantic notions about indigenous peoples: there is no such thing as a »holy alliance« of these peoples with nature or an essential understanding of ecological interactions; that would be absurd, in my thinking. On the other hand, these are historical cognitive processes, observations over long periods of time that have crystallized as an access that is compatible with nature and interwoven with it. Vine Deloria, a member of the Standing Rock Sioux (Lakota) in the United States, has said that indigenous peoples have no special enlightenment about how to treat the world, except to let themselves be guided by nature and to allow the behaviour of other living beings in the given ecological milieu bear fruit for their own actions. Indigenous peoples have also developed sophisticated systems for adapting to the respective climatic and topographical spaces, not only in order to preserve the richness of the natural environment, but to intensify it for future generations where possible.

The rainforest, which we want to protect for its biological diversity and uniqueness, has become so valuable not despite, but rather because of its sustainable use by indigenous peoples. Studies on the rainforests of the Amazon basin suggest that indigenous communities systematically sowed edible and medicinal plants along their hunting trails and thus adapted their environment to their needs. The local »jungle« is therefore by design, and did not end up that way by any natural means. The Ba'ka Pygmies in the Central African Republic continue to cure the vast majority of diseases among themselves today with plants that they have planted on their trails through the forest.

Indigenous territory, nature, and environment are social spaces that would not have come into being without the creative existence of humans.

An untouched wilderness, a space deliberately emptied of people, is literally alien to such learning and creative thinking.

However, a process of this kind can also be broken off or extinguished if the environment is constantly degraded, the value system pursued with repression and discrimination, the people physically annihilated. The cases in this booklet about the transformation of forests into monocultures are eloquent examples.

### Indigenous peoples, forests, and current needs

In exchange with nature and in a historical process over sometimes thousands of years, value systems have developed and specific knowledge about the natural environment has evolved. As results of a historical process, they are of course also changeable. Indigenous peoples were and still are in a position to adapt their way of life to changes in the environment and to continue dynamically developing their knowledge. The Saami in Norway, however, are just now learning that climate change is accelerating these kinds of changes to the extent that evolutionary adaptation is scarcely enough anymore.

For some time now, indigenous peoples have been thinking publicly and in a variety of ways about how their lives can be shaped according to their own models and their own means, under conditions of orien-

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tation towards the market economy, capitalist exploitation, and development parameters designed for industrial production.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the forest aspect, in the mid-1990s the Lil'Wats tried to start up a factory in British Columbia, Canada for the production of wooden building elements for housing construction, in collaboration with the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), and to produce competitively for the market. They commissioned cybernetic models of self-organization of the individual factory units that were meant to respect the time budgeted for the traditional social life in their community, so that the project would not slide into becoming one of pure profit expectation. The council of elders of the Lil'Wats was involved in order to carry out the tree felling in accordance with the sustainability principles of the Lil'Wats. In this form, the project ended, since neither the traditional communal life nor the integrity of the forest could be guaranteed in the time budget.

In Brazil, indigenous peoples have come to concentrate on the sale of non-wood products in their considerations of the utility of the forest for the market economy: fruits and berries (juice concentrates, jam), nuts (also for export), perfumes, oils, resins, rubber, honey, and the extracts of medicinal plants. The average value of these forest products is higher than the proceeds from pure wood use. Indigenous representatives in northwest Colombia negotiated with the city administration and the water utilities of the metropolis of Medellín about the protection of clean drinking water. The stock of trees around the headwaters of the Río Sinú is to be used and tended by the local indigenous population according to traditional methods. Parallel to this, the self-organisation of the local communities was deliberately strengthened, the cultural relations in the communities reinvigorated, the appropriation of natural resources planned and carried out sparingly under the terms of the self-determined economic activity. The project originated in a protracted mediation process between different interests, also within the communities. In the case of the Río Sinú, it was facilitated and agreed upon between interest groups in the indigenous communities to





»Almost 38 billion tonnes of carbon is stored in forests where Indigenous Peoples have rights of use. Strong evidence, including from partners countries [sic], suggests that where Indigenous Peoples have been empowered and their rights respected, forests generally remain standing.«

Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), 2016

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»The crisis situations [caused by climate change] require rapid and decisive changes. The world must recognise the importance of indigenous peoples for the development of terrestrial spiritualities and theologies and for the protection of land. The religious communities must accept the gift of indigenous spiritualities in our paradigm shift: away from a development model based on the dominion over creation, towards understanding, that all life of creation is interconnected.«

From the joint statement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Working Group on Climate Change and the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples' Networks Reference Group, 26 June 2019, Hualien, Taiwan

completely ban logging in the remaining rainforest. Reforestation projects for the already deforested areas were designed at the same time, and the communities were permitted a supply of fast-growing firewood and construction timber. This was expected to give space to slower growing, native tree species and to alternative forms of wood use.

Conceptually, such experiments point to current debates in European countries on the »solidarity economy«. Their theoretical history is embedded in Karl Polanyi's studies of non-capitalist forms of economy and society in the 1940s. Both strands of discussion place emphasis on the independence of social and cultural parameters and argue against the independence of the economy.<sup>3</sup>

### The protection of the forest and the survival of indigenous peoples is not automatic

Both aspects – the traditional skills to regulate complex ecological systems and the processes of the (political) self-organization of indigenous communities – have been the subject of international conferences and international regulations since the late 1980s. The Brundtland Report (Our Common Future) said it in 1987: indigenous communities represent a source of

comprehensive traditional knowledge and experience that connects humanity with its origins. Their disappearance is a loss for the rest of the society as well, which could still learn quite a bit from traditional skills to regulate complex ecological systems.<sup>4</sup> In the same way, chapter 26 of 1992's Agenda 21 called upon governments to involve indigenous peoples in efforts to ensure the continued existence of rare animal and plant species in particular. This includes, for example, traditional techniques in Australia for putting out forest fires or methods of protecting important forest groves in Ghana.

Many governments do not acknowledge the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to access the forest areas on their territories. The interests of governments and business are categorically given priority when raw materials are found, or other forms of use are privileged, such as the cultivation of soya, oil palms or eucalyptus. The same applies to the establishment of conservation areas for biodiversity without the involvement of local population. Without the recognition of their rights, indigenous peoples and communities have few effective instruments in their hands to enforce against corporations, governments, large landowners, or nature conservation institutions, regardless of individual successes through local resistance.

In the UN Framework Convention adopted in 1992 for the preservation of biological diversity and in subsequent conferences by the states parties, the preservation of cultural diversity and local knowledge has been defined as essential for maintaining biological diversity. In 1989, at Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), indigenous peoples were given binding rights to their ancestral lands and a consultation process conferred legitimacy on their policies for material use of the natural environment. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples from the year 2007 goes further, positing self-determined access to land and resources and a right to veto unwanted development projects, even though this declaration is not binding under international law.<sup>5</sup>

There are also a large number of political programmes by international organisations and national governments – for example, the programmes of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.<sup>6</sup> Even so, legal guarantees, political declarations of intent, and programmes usually only have a concrete effect if they are constantly reminded, called upon, and compelled through complaints or legal actions to use effective outreach.

International civil society networks and not least churches can come into consideration here as supporters who can argue effectively for the sustainable use of the (rain) forest with the firm inclusion of its historical subjects. Some of this may seem unusual to these supporters because at first glance it seems unrelated to forest conservation – the recovery of political space and constitutional institutions, as well as respect for the autonomy of indigenous peoples in their genuine preservation of creation.

Conversely, we are all learning in our dialogue with indigenous peoples that economics alone is not a viable rationale for the relationship to inner and outer human nature – lest the atrophy of our senses progress faster than the destruction of our habitat. ■

- 1 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>.
- 2 See the programmatic statements on adaptation processes as part of climate change in Tebtebba Foundation (ed.) (2009): *Asia Summit on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples: Report of the Summit*, Baguio City, Philippines.
- 3 See Karl Polanyi (1978): *The Great Transformation – Political and Economic Origins of Societies and Economic Systems*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp. On the solidarity economy see Sven Giegold and Dagmar Embshoff (eds) (2008): *Solidarische Economy im Globalisierten Kapitalismus*. Hamburg: VSA.
- 4 See World Commission on Environment and Development (1987): *Our Common Future*. Annex to UN General Assembly Document A/42/427 – Development and International Co-operation: Environment. New York-Geneva. The Brundlandt Report was the triggering factor for the environmental conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
- 5 UN General Assembly Document (2007), Resolution 61/295; see also the preliminary studies and their progressive legal doctrine: Daes, Erica-Irene (2001): *Indigenous Peoples and Their Relationship to Land*. Final working paper to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. UN document E/CN.4/ Sub.2/2001/21, Geneva; Daes, Erica-Irene (2004): *Indigenous Peoples' Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources*. Final working paper to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. UN document E/CN.4/Sub.2/2004/30, Geneva.
- 6 See [https://www.bmz.de/de/themen/allgemeine\\_menschenrechte/hintergrund/blickpunkt\\_indigene.html](https://www.bmz.de/de/themen/allgemeine_menschenrechte/hintergrund/blickpunkt_indigene.html); <https://www.bmz.de/de/themen/klimaschutz/Wald-und-Klima/index.html>.



Dr Theodor Rathgeber  
Scientific author and  
human rights expert

## INFORMATION

# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN WEST PAPUA

A struggle for survival between economic interests, exclusion, and loss of identity

**W** With a total population of around 268 million people, Indonesia is the fourth most populous country on earth. Indonesia's population is composed of hundreds of ethnic groups, with much of its ethnic diversity restricted to the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat (hereafter referred to as West Papua). In contrast to many ethnic groups in Indonesia, the West Papuan ethnic groups

are considered indigenous communities – each Papuan is part of a tribal group characterized by a common kinship system, its own language and history, and one common cosmological world view that deeply connects all members to the land of their ancestors. Linguistic studies have shown that there are currently some 274 indigenous languages in West Papua, most of which have fewer than three thousand speakers. Many of the languages are endangered.



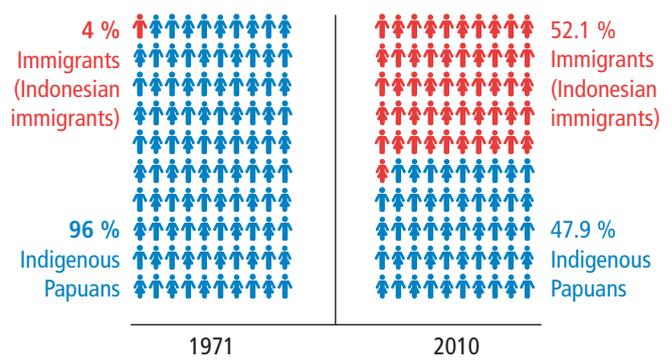


📍 West Papua: Kiosks with scant selections

The Indonesian government rejects the concept of indigenous peoples according to the international definition, depriving the West Papuan peoples of indigenous status and its related rights and freedoms. In the government’s view, all Indonesian citizens are of equally indigenous origins. The government has repeatedly used this argument in international human rights treaties to register its reservations and to shrug off its obligation to provide special protection to indigenous groups in Indonesia. Today the most common threat to indigenous peoples in West Papua is demographic change through government-driven and spontaneous migration, as well as land grabbing and deforestation. A key engine of this development comes from business-oriented development projects run by the state to exploit marine, forest, and mineral resources, and to facilitate agricultural use.

The demographic change in West Papua is increasingly leading to the exclusion and marginalization of indigenous communities. A census from 1971 showed that the total population of West Papua consisted of 96 per cent indigenous Papuans and only 4 per cent

**Total population of West Papua  
2.93 million inhabitants**



immigrants. According to the last census in 2010, indigenous Papuans made up only 47.9 per cent of the population of West Papua. The growing number of large-scale agrarian projects and the lucrative exploitation of minerals and tropical timber are attracting ever more people from other parts of Indonesia to resource-rich West Papua.

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Large investment projects have numerous adverse effects on the environment and the land rights situation of indigenous Papuans. Palm oil plantations and their associated deforestation have a particularly strong impact on the food security of indigenous communities. As plantations are built (and expanded), vital food sources are often destroyed. The use of chemicals in mines has polluted the water and soil in various areas of West Papua, depriving indigenous communities of their basis of existence. Investments through private companies often include land rights conflicts between investors and indigenous groups. The state authorities and security apparatus usually side with business. Again and again, human rights defenders report on criminalization and acts of violence affecting indigenous landowners who protest against land rights violations and exploitation.

There are few examples in West Papua of indigenous communities having benefited from mines or palm oil plantations. Corporate promises to support social or infrastructure projects are often not kept. Indigenous communities lose their land, forced to give up their original way of life and work for the companies as day labourers or employees in low-level positions. Many indigenous families run the risk of slipping into poverty after losing their land.

A large part of the indigenous population lives in the peripheral areas of West Papua, where basic state services in education and health care are limited or non-

existent. In 2017 and 2018, the lack of health care facilities in remote areas of the country led to repeated cases of malnutrition and to epidemics with over a hundred casualties. These were exclusively indigenous communities – children and the elderly in particular – affected by the epidemics. Insufficiently qualified teachers and serious deficiencies in the state education system have meant that the educational level in rural areas of West Papua has dropped far below the national average. What's more, indigenous families often live only off of what is available on their land. Many families have only limited financial resources, which they earn from selling products from the forest or from their gardens. Low levels of education, poor health, and lagging economic competitiveness have made indigenous groups in West Papua the losers in the state's development policy. ■



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»It is not possible to over-emphasize the desperate situations facing Indigenous Peoples worldwide. Their continuing subjection to colonial subjugation, to socio-political oppression, economic exploitation, suppression through militarization, forced displacement in conflict torn areas must be stopped. The ongoing impact of the so-called Doctrine of Discovery that deprives Indigenous Peoples of their sacred lands through resource extraction, ecological catastrophe, land grabbing, and human trafficking leave their communities utterly devastated with psycho-social consequences that have decimated and continue to traumatise Indigenous peoples both now and for generations to come. [...] Integral to the healing of Indigenous Peoples and for the transformation of oppressive institutions and relationships is the provision of safe spaces and opportunities that enable and make possible reconciliation. Such healing is imperative for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and reconciliation between the two groups is necessary especially in the context of ecumenism.«

Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Tongan-Australian theologian and programme executive for indigenous peoples' rights, World Council of Churches, Geneva

# LANDGRABBING IN KALIKI, WESTPAPUA

- ▼ Pastor George Pelasula (3rd from left, Baidub congregation) supports his congregation in their fight against the consequences of deforestation and environmental degradation.

**T**he indigenous Papuans in Indonesia suffer from land grabbing, environmental destruction, and disappearing resources. An international delegation from the World Council of Churches visited the Indonesian island in March 2019 and brought images to the Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace that depicted pervasive human rights violations and ruthless marginalization of the original population.





🕒 The villagers cherish their traditions, but they are waiting to participate in development and access to the economy.

**K**aliki, a village with huts scattered far into the rainforest, is one vivid example. The place is located in about 120 kilometres from Merauke, the easternmost city in Indonesia, capital of the province of West Papua. One of its traditions is to offer guests a stunning reception. Men, women and children get involved, dancing around the visitors and accompanying them to the sound of drums to the entrance of the village, where they decorate guests with elaborately woven grass and flower crowns. Face painting in traditional patterns is also

part of the reception ritual. A highlight of the moving ceremony is when new, poetic names are bestowed upon visitors, like »Sprout of the Betel Nut«.

The road to Kaliki is not for the faint of heart. The journey from Merauke takes three hours, through flat countryside where one rice field follows another. It goes fast until about five kilometres outside the village. That's when the cars sink into the mud and need an hour to cover the short distance remaining. The exceedingly warm welcome compensates for the exhausting trip, but the festive mood soon dissipates.



- At the festive reception in the village, the Kaliki villagers outfit themselves and their guests with all the natural jewellery the forest offers.

channels – or so he suspects. He closes with an urgent appeal for help, pivoting to his church, the Gereja Kristen Injili Tanah Papua (Protestant Church in West Papua, GKI-TP). Church construction started eleven years ago, but there is no money to finish it.

George Pelasula, a pastor in Baidub, a community with 46 families spread across two villages, tells of the insatiable land hunger of the palm oil industry. »We are sandwiched between two palm oil plantations«, he reports. »This is why the forest was cut down.« The local facilities each extend over one hundred hectares.

In Kaliki, 1.6 million hectares of land are designated for corn and sugar cane fields, one of the largest agricultural industry projects in the world. NGOs estimate that 13.1 billion cubic metres of wood have been sacrificed to deforestation. An international company produces biofuels locally and cultivates rice and sugar cane. The project ostensibly serves to provide food security in Indonesia. The local churches, however, are convinced that the lion's share will be exported.

Soberly Mateus Kaeze, the village leader, describes the situation of the indigenous Papua who live here.

Briefly and concisely he lists the problems: land grabbing, hunger, destruction of the environment, lack of access to health care and education. »Our forests are damaged and progressively disappearing«, he says. »But nature is our livelihood, and we are responsible for protecting it.« His other major concerns are education for the children and the completion of the road to the village. The last stretch was not completed because the money earmarked for it disappeared into dark

The people of Kaliki and Baidub are hunters and gatherers. Before the palm oil and agricultural industry intervened in their lives, they cultivated sandalwood and processed crocodile skin into bags. The flour of the sago palms remains their most important staple food, but the number of trees is decreasing dramatically. When major investors purchased the land around Kaliki for their own purposes, a perfidious

## INFORMATION



- The children in Kaliki have little access to education or health care.

system started in which the villagers were deprived of their property. The companies bought their land at rock-bottom prices. In Kaliki, they acquired 20 hectares of land for the ridiculous price of the equivalent of 83 euros. »People don't even know what they sign when they're offered a contract«, declares Pastor Pelasula. The sellers do not even receive a copy of the document. How is one to bring a legal case for suspected fraud?

This is how they end up getting recruited to clear the forests and work in the factories for poverty wages. The corporations overawe them and make pledges they do not fulfil. Tribal elders are given gifts to keep the people compliant, the promised schools are never built and – hardest of all – people are no longer allowed to enter the forest.

»Our forest is no ordinary forest; it is a political issue«, says Pastor Jimmy Sormin of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI). The prohibition law originates from the rule of the dictator Suharto, who summarily claimed the forest as state property. Hunting is no longer allowed, and fishing is banned already, since rivers and lakes are heavily polluted or even poisoned from factory runoff. »Kaliki is surrounded by factories discharging wastewater into the rivers«, reports Kristian Ari of Silva Papua Lestari, an NGO working to preserve the rainforest. He and many of his fellow campaigners document the damage to people's health, particularly women's health, because they are most often in contact with the water. »They are the first victims of pollution« in his judgment. He stresses that »the forest must be protected, it's the last wealth that still benefits the people here.«

The indigenous Papuans see their chances for a dignified life dwindling. Almost none of them has a stake in the development of the country, or access to trade or the labour market. They worry about their children's future as they watch how young girls get pregnant all too early. They are helpless against the growing influence of company employees, who bring with them drugs and prostitution. Fears of HIV infection and AIDS are growing.

Depression is spreading. Pastor George Pelasula experiences its consequences day after day, as he combats the increasing domestic violence among the members of his flock in his capacity as pastor. »They're simply desperate«, he declares, »and don't know what to do with their anger.« ■



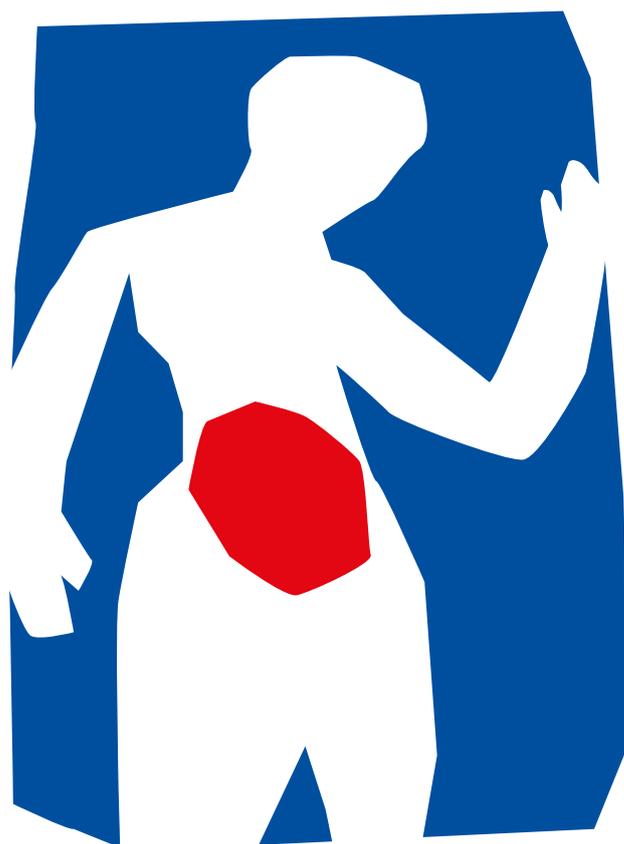
Marion Unger  
Freelance journalist

# A CULTURE OF PRESERVATION FOR THE WONDAMA TRIBE IN WEST PAPUA

**T**he myth of Kuri and Pasai, still told today, is meant to serve the members of the Wondama tribe as a model for life in and with nature. Another aspect of the myth relates to the question of the self-determination of the Wondama tribe, which will not be discussed further here. In the Papuan culture, people have a duty to protect nature because they themselves are a part of it.

## The legend of Kuri and Pasai

Long ago, there was a family who lived peacefully in Wondama in a place called Inggorosai. Kuri and Pasai lived together with their mother Inggokuori on the upper Simo river. One day Kuri, the older son, built a drum out of a piece of wood and called it a tifa. Every time Kuri played the drum, all were spellbound. They danced and rejoiced. Pasai, the younger brother, built another tifa, but he did not know where he could find something to cover up the holes in the tifa. He asked his brother Kuri for help, but Kuri explained to him that the skin on top of the drum came from their mother's stomach. Pasai sought out his mother and asked her for part of her stomach. His mother agreed, but was gravely injured.



## INFORMATION

She called for help, but no one could help her. She died soon after. Pasai was very sad about what he had done. He was disappointed because Kuri had lied to him. Pasai confronted Kuri and they had a big fight. Pasai then left to the west, and Kuri to the east. Before Pasai left Wondama, he promised his people that he would return. He said, »This is the sign for my return«: »gua vera na dou« and »gua ve sapo«, which meant that he would come back in a vehicle that crossed the horizon.

In the beginning, the family lived peacefully in Inggorosai. But then Pasai wanted to replicate Kuri's tifa. Sadly Pasai was not aware of the consequences of his actions, which led to the destruction of his mother's belly whence Pasai and Kuri came.

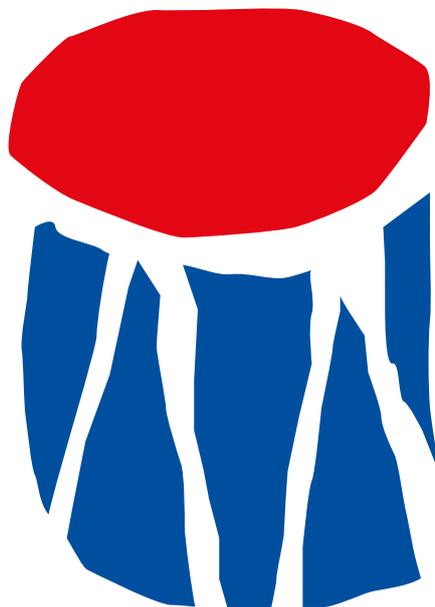
Maybe this is why the Wondama love their land and their forest so much: there are still secret and magical places among them. The traditional method of conservation consists of protecting the land for future generations. The people fish, hunt and gather food in the forest only for their basic needs. They don't think about what they will eat the next day because they can easily find food in the sea, the jungle, or their fields.

When I visited the villages this year [2019, *ed.*], I noticed that the people at the market sold only limited quantities of goods such as vegetables, fish, and meat. The river that flows through the village is clean. Children played in the water while their mothers did the laundry. Fathers bathed with their younger sons not far away from where the girls were. Other families were just returning from work in the fields. The mothers brought in what they had harvested, while the fathers carried bows and arrows, cleavers and axes with them. They have a full life, even as others see them as poor. Wondama Bay is still green and peaceful and life there is such that others can only dream of. Perhaps they lack such legends. ■



Dr Fransina Yoteni

Member of the Evangelical Church in West Papua (GKI-TP) and member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches





🔍 Palm oil plantation

# CONSUMPTION AND THE RAINFOREST

## Destruction of the rainforest destroys habitats, biodiversity, and the climate

**D** The forests of our earth are essential for life. They store carbon and are therefore indispensable in the fight against global warming.

If these forests are cleared, tremendous quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> are released into the atmosphere: today about 13 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions come from the destruction of forests. Tropical rainforests, the »green lungs« of the earth, are especially important.

The debates over climate change mean that we hear regularly about such news. On the other hand, it is rarely reported that the destruction of the rainforests simultaneously implies the destruction of habitats for humans, animals, and plants. Many indigenous peoples live in and off of the forest, which provides them

with food, medicine, and shelter. With the disappearance of their forest home, their cultures are also gradually dying out, as innumerable animal and plant species die out as well. Three-quarters of all plant and animal species make their homes in tropical forests. The destruction of these forests is proceeding at a rapid pace and with incredible brutality.

Brazil is the current focus of attention because the rainforests there are being burned to an unprecedented degree, fuelled by the policy of President Jair Bolsonaro. He sees the rainforest predominantly as an economic area that should be used to make money by planting monocultures for animal feed and energy crops after clearing the woodland. The rights of the indigenous peoples there are being increasingly restricted.

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Indonesia is also being affected by the destruction of the rainforest, and with it areas that include UEM member churches. Here the point is to extract the valuable tropical wood and plant monocultures for export, with a focus on the cultivation of palm oil plantations. Indonesia is one of the world’s largest producers of palm oil. More than half of the country has been liberalized for economic exploitation in the easternmost Papuan provinces of Indonesia alone. The rights of the indigenous population are being disregarded in the process, and protests are often violently suppressed. A large proportion of the timber exported from there is illegally harvested. The constitution enables the state to ignore the land rights of indigenous peoples. The military does this regularly.

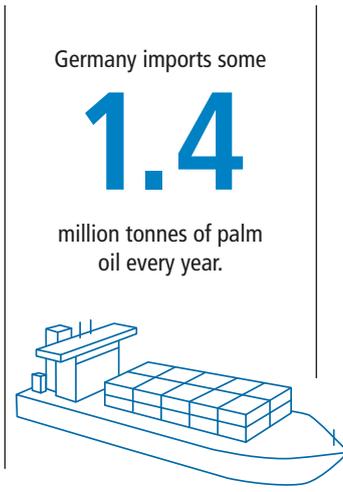
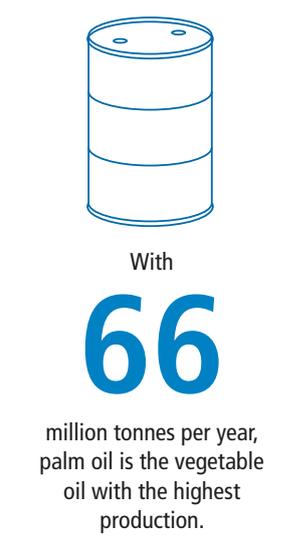
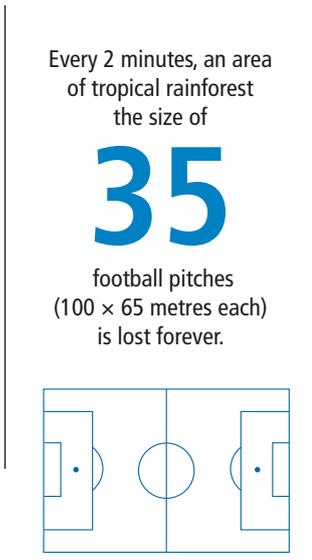
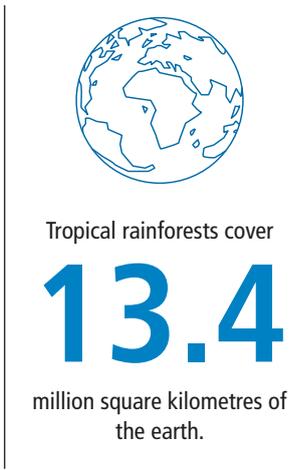
**Our consumption implicates us – And we can do something about it!!**

What do we have to do with these developments, which usually happen very far away from us? On the one hand, we have to realize that climate change does not recognize national or continental borders. On the other hand, our consumption makes us beneficiaries of the destruction of the rainforest.

Cheap tropical wood furniture is a welcome bargain that is gladly bought. These woods arrive in our DIY shops and furniture showrooms, often through indirect routes meant to disguise their true origins. Terms like hardwood, precious timber, or plantation wood are supposed to eliminate any potential suspicions that these materials come from the tropics. When buying wood products, then, we should pay attention to the origin and avoid products made of tropical wood (primary forests). It is best to default to products made from Western European woods. The FSC seal (Forest Stewardship Council) is a reliable guarantee for wood and paper products from secondary forests.

Palm oil can be found in many products we use daily, for example in food products such as margarine, chocolate spread, granola and muesli, ice cream, pastries, instant soups, frozen pizzas, and chocolate bars. It is also added to washing, cleaning, and care products, as well as cosmetics. Palm oil is mixed into biofuels.

The EU has required that palm oil in foodstuffs be labelled since 2014. Since that date, we have been able to check the ingredients on packaging to verify whether a product contains palm oil and, if necessary,





◀ Fresh oil palm fruits

The forest itself has changed irrevocably. The forest used to provide our community with almost everything – from food to rattan: »Today, in Jambi province in central Sumatra, the Orang Rimba community lives in abject poverty. Many have been left homeless, live in plastic tents, and without livelihood support. [Some of them] said that they had once been self-sufficient but are now reduced to begging on the highway or ›stealing‹ oil palm fruits from the plantation area to sell and make money.«

Human Rights Watch: »When We Lost the Forest, We Lost Everything«:  
Oil Palm Plantations and Rights Violations in Indonesia, Report, 22 September 2019

choose differently. Often the palm oil is replaced by sunflower oil. Cosmetics and cleaning products have no such labelling requirement, so the words »palm oil« do not appear on the product information, replaced by others like »sodium lauryl sulfoacetate«, »cetyl palmitate«, or »vegetable oil«. Most of these are disguised derivatives of palm oil.

Since the main reasons for the destruction of the rain-forest in South America are meat production and the cultivation of soya for animal feed (which also serves factory farming in Germany), we can contribute to the preservation of these forests through conscious or limited meat consumption, or by renouncing meat altogether. ■



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[www.regenwald.org](http://www.regenwald.org)  
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[www.greenpeace.de](http://www.greenpeace.de)



# BRAZIL

»Deforestation brings our lives  
out of balance«



## INFORMATION

**T**he deforestation in the indigenous territories of the Amazônia Legal region has accelerated at an alarming rate recently. According to the Instituto Socioambiental ([www.socioambiental.org](http://www.socioambiental.org)), deforestation in the ten most affected indigenous territories increased by 124 per cent between August 2017 and July 2018. The environmental agenda of the Bolsonaro government includes an irresponsible questioning of the official data on deforestation and its effects on the environment and the lives of the traditional peoples and communities living in those areas. The government is involved in the promotion of agrobusiness and the exploitation of the commons, especially in mining and the criminal exploitation of wood.

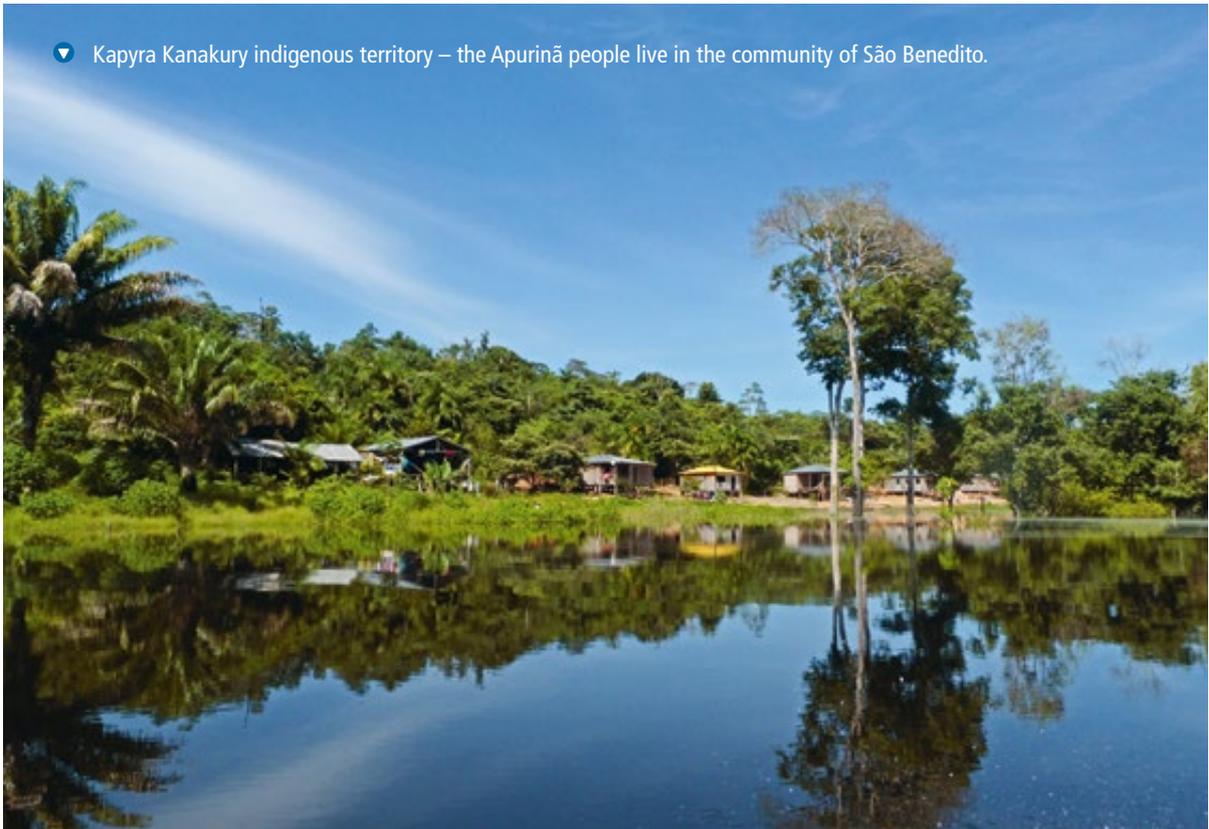
Indigenous homelands are important barriers to the destruction of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest. About 23 per cent of the Amazônia Legal region is indigenous territory. Recently, however, these areas have been plagued by frequent visits from loggers, miners, and land grabbers.

For indigenous peoples, deforestation does not only mean the destruction of trees. There are other beings in the forest that must be equally respected. Pedro Agamenon Arara, Kazike of the Karo Arara people of the indigenous territory of Igarapé Lourdes in the state of Rondônia, explains that deforestation brings all life out of balance: not only are there trees in the forest, but also other beings. »There are animals, and our spirits as well.«

For these peoples, the forest is a sacred space, the source of their life force. It is the Kazike's creed that the forest and the rivers must be respected. »Everything that exists in the forest and in the water has owners. We don't see them, but we know that they're there, and they take care of the forest and the water. Whatever bad thing happens, other beings feel it too. If there is no forest, if there is no river, the spirits suffer too, and disappear.« Deforestation therefore brings imbalance along with it.

»Our territory is our sacred space«, says shaman Firmirino Arara. »We are connected with all beings of the fo-

▼ Kapyra Kanakury indigenous territory – the Apurinã people live in the community of São Benedito.



»It [the 2019 Alternative Nobel Prize] has come at just the right time. I'm very happy. [...] This gives me the strength to carry on fighting to defend the soul of the Amazon. We, the peoples of the planet, need to ... live well, caring for our land so that future generations can continue to use it.«

Davi Kopenawa, spokesman for the Yanomami people of Brazil, as quoted by Survival International

rest and the rivers. Our spirituality is connected. So we have to take care of this place, and we mustn't destroy it. We need this space to be able to live in harmony.«

»Everyone deserves to live in peace«, says teacher Ernane Nakaxion Arara. »We deserved it too. Each person must live quietly on their piece of land. If deforestation continues, eventually we'll be living on nothing. We take our food from this land. We fight for the demarcation of our land. We do not want it to be destroyed; the raids don't bring anything good«, says the teacher.

»For us«, says Kazike Pedro, »being rich doesn't mean having soybeans, owning lots of pasture land with livestock, or using pesticides. This is how the non-indigenous are rich. For us being rich means having a forest, having a clean river with healthy fish, being healthy and living quietly.«

»We think not only of ourselves, but of our grandchildren, of future generations and of the non-indigenous as well. Destruction affects us all. It seems that the non-indigenous think only of themselves: they want only to be rich. They don't think about the future of their grandchildren, of that generation. Our future generations also need the forest to maintain a balanced and harmonious life. We cannot leave only sadness for our future generations«, says Maria Karo Arara.

### Raids on indigenous territories

Two indigenous peoples, the Apurinã and the Jamamadi Deni, live in Pauini, in the state of Amazonas. There are six demarcated indigenous territories for the Apurinã in this region – Kamadeni, Catipari/Ma-

moría, Guajahaã, Seruini/Mariene, Água Preta/Inari, and Peneri/ Tacaquiri – and the three unmarked territories: of Kapyra/Kanakury, Baixo Seruini, and Sãkoã. The Jamamadi Deni people live in the indigenous territory of Inauini/Teuini, a demarcated territory. However, this does not mean that they are safe from possible raids on their land by loggers, hunters, or fishermen.

Kapyra/Kanakury, one of the unmarked areas in the region of the Apurinã people, has been under serious threat from loggers and farmers for twenty years. This indigenous area is one of the traditional Apurinã territories and consists of four communities. In one of them, Xãmakery, the mother tongue of the Apurinã is used as the first language. Right now, the government of the state is undertaking a project to turn this indigenous land into a biological reserve, which has caused the Apurinã great concern. If it goes through, all four communities have to leave their traditional land.

The indigenous territory of Peneri/Tacaquiri has been subject to raids by loggers and farmers since 2017. The Apurinã are now forced to monitor their land themselves since the authorities responsible do a very poor job of it. The reality of the indigenous territories in the south of the state of Amazonas, in the middle of the Amazon rainforest, is characterized by raids on the territories of the Apurinã and Jamamadi by loggers, farmers, land grabbers, fishermen, and hunters.

No indigenous land has been demarcated in Brazil, not even in the Amazon region. The current national government has opposed demarcations and has promoted the mining of wood and ores in indigenous territories. This has considerably accelerated the incursions into these territories.



▶ Inauini/Teuini indigenous territory – Jamamadi children and youth dance a polonaise (Tocimão community – Pauini-AM)

«Kapyra/Kanakury has been our traditional land since the ancient tribe. My children and my wife were born here, and this is where we want to continue living, off of what this land has to offer us. We don't want to abandon this land to go live in the city», says Kazike Manoel Apurinã, of the Xâmakery community, in Kapyra/Kanakury indigenous territory.

«Recently we have received threats from hunters and fishermen on our land. This has made finding sustenance more difficult. Hunting and fishing are not like they used to be. We have problems fishing and hunting because there are so many raids on our land», says Francisco Jamamadi, of the Tocimão community, in Inauini/Teuini indigenous territory.

«The feeling of living in an indigenous territory that is not demarcated is a feeling of insecurity and fear. Since we have no territorial security, our farmland is not safe either. And there are poor prospects for differentiated indigenous education and health care from the current government, which does not guarantee us demarcated and secure territory», says Kennedy Apurinã, leader of the São Benedito community, in Kapyra/Kanakury indigenous territory. ■



Ana Patrícia  
Chaves Ferreira



Jandira Keppi



Renate Gieras Comin  
Council of Mission Among  
Indigenous Peoples (COMIN)

[www.comin.org.br](http://www.comin.org.br)

## INFORMATION

# SOUTHERN AFRICA

## »People of the West«

### A visit to the bushmen in Botswana

**A**round a hundred thousand San live in the countries of southern Africa – Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Angola – with over half of them in Botswana. The San and the Khoikhoi belong to population groups known as the Khoisan. Genetic studies indicate that the Khoisan are the oldest group of people in existence today.

Botswana is home to the Basarwa (»people of the west«), or San (»bush dwellers«), as they call themselves. They were hunters and gatherers, freely roaming the arid regions until farming and mining areas put limits on this people and various governments resettled them onto reservations. The San were made to settle down permanently, and the same policy applied in Botswana. The settlements had names like New Xade, Kacgae, Kalkfontein, and D'kar. The San received cattle and cows from the state that were supposed to facilitate their transition into a different,

»modern« way of life. But the success anticipated by the resettlement project failed to materialize. Today most of the San hire themselves out as unskilled day labourers or sell whatever they can get. They are plagued by unemployment, the loss of their culture and especially their land, along with a general lack of future prospects.

Today only about two thousand San in Botswana can still live as their ancestors once did: they retain their old way of life as much as they can, roaming widely. The traditional way of life of the San was very much adapted to nature. They moved through the country, sometimes up to 2,500 kilometres a year, and 90 per cent of their diet came from wild fruits. They hunted various animals using poisoned arrows and preserved their meat by drying. In San culture there is no leader. Societies are equal and bound together by complex family ties. The language of the Khoisan, together with all of its existing dialects, is considered one of the most



Elizabeth Madiamakedi, Church elder of the Charles Hill congregation, with her grandson



- Some of the mothers (on the left in the picture) come and help out every day, watching their children and observing how and what they learn from their teacher Qaia Jacob (shown standing).

difficult in the world. It is a click language divided into seven basic clicks, with up to 85 variations on each.

About four thousand residents live in Charles Hill, a village on the border of Botswana and Namibia. It is located in the central Kalahari, the settlement area of the San. Some two hundred San families are thought to live in and around Charles Hill: two thousand people of all ages.

The twenty active members of the Charles Hill congregation are lucky enough to have their own pastor. Kesegofetse Bapege has been working there since 2017. She is one of only 34 pastors in the ELCB, which has about 20,000 members nationwide. The United Evangelical Mission has been providing funding for the project »Tlaa re Ithute – Come to Learn« for a year now. The ELCB has already supported other projects with the San. »With this project we now want to reach the children who are more or less left to their own devices. We've set high goals for ourselves and want to show and prove to the community that the church is there for them and of course supports the rights of the San«, explains Dickson Moyambo, the General Secretary of the church.

Every day, twenty-five to forty children aged two to six spend seven hours in the church. The special thing about them is that roughly 90 per cent of the children

are San. Instead of going to the shebeen (a black-market speakeasy) with their parents, they can experience a regular routine with other children their age: playing games, making crafts, singing and dancing. Together with their two teachers, Qaia Jacob and Tiny Cooper, they also learn to count in English, introduce themselves to each other, and recite rhymes. Their own culture and language are used during other instruction. Some mothers come in and help out every day, watching their children and observing how and what they learn. Other parents have little interest in doing so. But those who understand are welcoming of what the church offers. After all, their living conditions remind them every day that they are the losers in modern Botswana society, no matter how hard they try.

Outreach to the parents and the broader community could also use improvement. When visiting the settlements, the ELCB staff often encounter elderly San who are languishing in misery before their eyes. ■



Uli Baeye  
Project officer of the UEM

## WORSHIP SERVICE AND DEVOTION

# »Without roots, we die« Thoughts on Jeremiah 46:23

**A** When I was little, there were many prohibitions in our village on the Indonesian island of Java. We were not allowed to go very deep into the forest near our village, for example: the villagers believed there were spirits there that could bring bad luck. There was also a spring where we were not allowed to fish or contaminate the water. The villagers believed that eating fish from this water could cause sudden illness or death. There were many huge trees alongside this spring in our village. Under these trees we left eggs, traditional cakes, flowers, joss sticks, and incense. These trees were not to be cut down because the villagers believed they were holy or housed spirits.

None of these were simply myths or superstition. They were local wisdom with extensive meaning, and scary stories whose

real purpose was to protect the forest. People were supposed to leave the trees alone and preserve the spring for the everyday use of the villagers.

Nowadays, such local wisdom is no longer respected as it was in the past. When the number of inhabitants in Java increased, people needed more land and money. Today, no one fears the spirits and other perils of the forest. This is why the trees in the forest – even rainforests and forests on mountain slopes that protect the soil from erosion – were cut down to obtain more space to build and wood to sell. The forest is

being exploited in the name of investment and the economy. People build apartments, lay out quarries and sand pits, and plant corn, manioc, and bananas. But these plants are not rooted deeply or solidly enough in the earth. Plants cannot protect the earth without strong roots.



They shall cut down her forest,  
though it is impenetrable.  
Jeremia 46:23

Without roots, we die.  
For the human rights of indigenous peoples.

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## WORSHIP SERVICE AND DEVOTION

This keeps the earth from absorbing enough water. When the rain comes, it causes flash floods and landslides with many casualties. Without the strong roots of the trees, the earth has no power to prevent disasters.

The trees and the forest are often mentioned in the Bible, to show the beauty of a country or to symbolize something. Jeremiah uses a depiction of the felling of the forest to warn of an attack on Egypt by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah introduces the coming conquerors who will prevail against the Egyptians: »Her enemies will march in force and come against her with axes like those who fell trees. They shall cut down her forest« (22b, 23a).

With this image, Jeremiah shows that the clearing of the forest can be seen as the annihilation of a people. In many countries, the felling of the rainforest endangers indigenous peoples. Logging, mining, and industrial agriculture are destroying ecosystems and threatening the indigenous peoples whose lives depend on the rainforest.

The destruction of the rainforest can be comprehended as the annihilation of two roots: the roots of the trees and the roots of the people (their identity). Both lead to disaster for humanity, in this case indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples see the rainforest not only as a source of food and livelihood, but also as the essential basis of their identity, culture, and

social life. Deforestation and exploitation of the rainforest violates the human rights of indigenous peoples, robbing them of their identity and their way of life. Their claim to their traditional land, their territories, and their resources is denied.

Without roots, we die. We learn from the Bible that God has made everything wonderful (Genesis 1:29-31), and we believe it. God loves and preserves all creation. Every created being is endowed with dignity, and human beings have the duty to preserve creation (Genesis 2:15). This is why the annihilation of the rainforest is in blatant contradiction to the biblical responsibility for creation. The destruction of the rainforest and other forests without sustainable planning is a murder of the people – a behaviour that is not consistent with the message of the Christian faith. ■



Dr Dyah Ayu Krismawati  
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## Prayer

### Preserving creation

Father, we praise you for all creation,  
the work of your hands,  
the warmth of the sun,  
the vitality of the water,  
the fertility of the earth,  
the treasures of the deep,  
the happiness of the people,  
that they may live through the generations before you.

We praise you because in you there is no poverty,  
no scarcity and no greed,  
Your hand gives abundantly to all,  
what lived before us and what lives today.

Father, where you are rich in mercy,  
we are poor in love and justice.  
Untold numbers of your children go hungry,  
because of a few who squander and hoard.  
The spirit of enmity in our hearts  
threatens all the life you've created,  
every day your creation becomes poorer  
in plants and animals,  
destroyed by our arrogance.

Father, give us a new heart,  
capable of love and respect for all  
that has grown with us from your creator's hand.  
Give us the spirit of your son,  
who has in the lilies of the field  
and the birds in the sky  
revealed to us your will.





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in three Continents

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