

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Cathy Ashton
High Representative and Vice President
The European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

February 12th 2010

Dear Cathy,

I am writing to bring the plight of the Awa Indians to your attention. The Awá are a small tribe living in the Amazon state of Maranhão. They are one of only two nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes remaining in Brazil. Some are uncontacted, ranging from tiny family groups living in the last fragments of Maranhão's rapidly dwindling rainforest outside legally recognized territories, to approximately 40 individuals living in the Araribóia reserve.

In the 1970s huge iron ore deposits were discovered in the region. This led to the Great Carajás Programme, a development project funded by the EU and the World Bank which included building a mine and a railway. The Awá and other indigenous peoples saw their lands opened up to unprecedented invasions by outsiders.

Today Awá lands are being targetted by loggers, who are bulldozing roads into their forests, and by settlers, who hunt the game they rely on, exposing the Indians to disease and violence. Several large cattle ranches occupy significant tracts of Awá land and have already destroyed much forest. A federal judge is due to decide whether they should be expelled.

I would urge the EU to do whatever it can to secure the official recognition of all the Awá territories and to ensure that the Brazilian authorities remove all invaders from Awa lands. These steps would protect the Awa Indians both now and in future from diseases transmitted by outsiders and to violence at their hands.

Thank you for any assistance you are able to provide.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.