

Brazil moves to evict invaders from Amazon's Awa lands

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Aerial view of the Tocantins river near Maraba, in Para state, northern Brazil, on August 6, 2013

Brazilian authorities said they are taking steps to remove illegal invaders from the Amazon heartland of the threatened Awa indigenous tribe.

Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) said in a statement seen Monday that justice officials will this week begin notifying intruders

that they have 40 days to leave Awa lands voluntarily with all their belongings.

Past that deadline, justice officials will send eviction notices to all non-indigenous people, it noted.

"All non-indigenous people live illegally in the area and will have to leave and there will be no right to compensation," said FUNAI, the government agency handling policies toward [indigenous peoples](#).

London-based Survival International, a champion of tribal rights worldwide which had campaigned for months in support of the Awa, welcomed the Brazilian government's long-awaited decision.

Last year, federal Judge Jirair Aram Meguerian had ordered all loggers and settlers to be removed from Awa lands in the eastern Amazon forests by the end of March 2013.

"Soldiers, field workers from FUNAI, environment ministry special agents and police officers are being dispatched to notify and remove the illegal settlers, ranchers and loggers, many of whom are heavily armed, from the Awa indigenous territory," Survival said in a statement released Monday.

"The operation comes at a crucial time as loggers are closing in on the tribe and more than 30 percent of the forest has already been destroyed," it said.

In 2012, Survival launched a drive spearheaded by Britain's Oscar-winning actor Colin Firth to focus world attention on the plight of the Awa.

Today, around 100 of the 450 Awa remain uncontacted and are at

particular risk of diseases brought in by the outsiders, according to Survival.

FUNAI estimates that there are 77 isolated indigenous tribes scattered across the Amazon.

Only 30 such groups have been located. Indigenous peoples represent less than one percent of Brazil's 200 million people and occupy 12 percent of the national territory, mainly in the Amazon.

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