

Isolated indigenous communities of South America under threat

July 30 2014

Indigenous people in the most remote regions of South America are under threat from development, a regional human rights body warned Tuesday, urging that inhabitants these areas be left alone.

In an 80-page report, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights said these far-flung territories where indigenous people live were under pressure from logging, mining and road-building operations that increasingly are bringing them in contact with the outside world.

"There is a high and continuously growing demand for the natural resources found in their territories, such as lumber, hydrocarbons, fossil fuels, minerals, and water resources. This demand generates incursions of non-indigenous persons into their territories that put their existence at risk," the report said.

"If we cannot ensure protection against these incursions, we face the risk of being witnesses to the complete disappearance of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact in the Americas," it warned.

The report cites cases of illegal logging in Brazil, Peru and Ecuador, oil drilling in Bolivia, illegal mining in Venezuela and cattle ranching and farming in Paraguay in or near protected indigenous territories.

There also are signs they are in Guyana and Suriname, near their respective borders with Brazil.

Growing global demand for raw materials have fueled rapid economic development over the past decade in South American countries, which in turn has brought complaints from environmentalist and indigenous groups.

According to the IACHR, states have set aside more than nine million hectares (22.2 million acres) as protected areas. But in practice, restrictions on the areas are often ignored, and enforcement non-existent.

"If undesired contact is prevented, most of the threats are eliminated and respect for the rights of the peoples is guaranteed," the report said urging respect for the principle of no contact.

Among the many examples of communities under threat is the greater Chaco area shared by Paraguay, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil; they are home to 200 [indigenous communities](#) and some 10,000 people—among the world's largest isolated communities.

Incursions, the report adds, also have spread illnesses to which the communities have no immunity, and have fueled violent clashes with outsiders.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Isolated indigenous communities of South America under threat (2014, July 30) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-07-isolated-indigenous-south-america-threat.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.