

[The Missionary Council for Indigenous Peoples](#), an organization of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Brazil, is collaborating in the development and promotion of this urgent action request from indigenous organizations of the Javari Valley in Brazil and their supporters. They are calling on the Brazilian government to take urgent measures to address a high incidence of diseases such as malaria and hepatitis among Indigenous peoples in the area, which is putting them at risk of extinction. Background information is given below. The Javari Indigenous Organizations are requesting individuals and groups to participate in this urgent action through a letter or petition.



Background for the Campaign

“Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley: United for Health and for Life”

Where is the Javari Valley?

The indigenous reserve of the Javari Valley is located in the western part of Amazonas State, Brazil, on the border with Peru. It is the second largest indigenous reserve in Brazil, with an area of 8.5 million square kilometres.

Who lives there?

The Marubo, Matis, Mayoruna, Kanamari, Kulina and Korubo peoples live in the Javari Valley. There are eight confirmed groups of “isolated peoples” – those who have no contact with outside groups. The Javari Valley comprises the greatest concentration of “isolated” indigenous peoples in South America. The total known population of the Javari Valley is around 4,900 persons.

Threat to the Indigenous Peoples

In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in diseases such as malaria and hepatitis A, B, C and Delta, and especially of Hepatitis B which has no cure. Serological testing, carried out in 2008 by Brazil’s National Health Foundation, showed the following results, based on 2,660 Indigenous from several of the Javari Valley’s peoples:

- 87.7% are carriers of Hepatitis A
- 68.9% (1,832 persons) are carriers of Hepatitis B
- 17.8% (197 persons) are carriers of Hepatitis B and D
- 5.3% (150 persons) are carriers of Hepatitis C
- Children between the ages of 0 and 14 years are the most numerous victims, making up about 50% of the cases

These diseases have caused the death of more than 300 individuals in the last ten years. In 2003, the first major crisis happened, with the death of 17 Indigenous people in several villages. In 2010, just among the Kanamari, 12 deaths occurred.

“In the Javari Valley in 2007, 123 infants died for every 1,000 born, a rate similar to those of Afghanistan and the poorer countries of Africa. The numbers from the Javari Valley are higher than those of countries like Mozambique which are facing an AIDS epidemic with a death rate of 81 children for every 1,000 born. The infant death rate in the Javari Valley is 5 times greater than the national average for non-indigenous (22.6 per 1,000 in 2006) and 2.5 times greater than the national indigenous average,” reported the newspaper “O Estado de São Paulo” on May 25, 2008.

The deaths have occurred in all the indigenous communities. Some of the many consequences include a large number of mothers without husbands or means to support themselves; orphaned children sick with Hepatitis B; and low self-esteem of the Indigenous people who, because of their grieving, have stopped practicing their rituals and celebrations.

The high incidence of infection has affected the indigenous communities of the Javari Valley in all aspects. Now, the Indigenous people are reacting and seeking to recuperate their self-esteem and their normal lifestyle.

Please support this cause!!

This campaign – “Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley: United for Health and for Life” – is an initiative of the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley (Univaja) and other indigenous organizations of the region. The objective is to mobilize students, professionals, faith groups, human rights organizations, and other concerned individuals or organizations to support the resistance of the Indigenous peoples against all threats to their life.

Together with other segments of society, the indigenous organizations intend to take their appeal to all levels of government in Brazil, seeking concrete, practical and efficient initiatives to contain the impact on indigenous life caused by the epidemics.

It is the responsibility of the Federal Government of Brazil to urgently adopt the necessary measures to avoid the extinction of these peoples. It is up to each one of us to call attention to and pressure the Brazilian authorities on behalf of the health and the life of the Indigenous peoples of the Javari Valley, Amazonas State, Brazil.