

To: His Excellency Mr. Paulo Alberto Soaras  
The Honourable Ambassador of Brazil  
Jakarta, Indonesia

Jakarta, August 22, 2011

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

Together with thousands of people that have organized protests today throughout Brazil and around the world, we have come to your Embassy to express our solidarity with the people threatened by the Belo Monte Dam Complex. Many different groups are threatened, and are opposed to the dam on the Xingu River: indigenous peoples, river bank communities, family farmers, fishermen, quilombolas, extractivists and others.

We have come to your Embassy in Jakarta to express our deep concern over the recent assassinations of leaders of social movements in the Amazon, as well as proposed changes to the Brazilian Forestry Code that if implemented would have disastrous social, economic and environmental impacts in the Amazon and other biomes, including the Cerrado, Atlantic Rain Forest and Caatinga.

We are deeply concerned about the devastating social and environmental consequences if the Belo Monte Dam is built, especially for indigenous peoples and other communities living along a 100 km stretch of the Xingu river known as the Big Bend (Volta Grande) where 80% of the river's flow would be diverted into an artificial reservoir. The project's enormous construction costs (currently budgeted at US\$ 20 billion), low levels of average of energy generation (only 40% of installed capacity) and unprecedented subsidies to the dam construction companies, have raised serious questions among Brazilian taxpayers about the project's efficiency and economic viability. It is also well known that the entire process of planning and environmental licensing of Belo Monte has been characterized by repeated political intervention and blatant disregard for the rule of law regarding human rights and environmental protection.

Over the past several months, a series of events related to the government's insistence on initiating construction of Belo Monte at any cost have caused alarm among Brazilians and friends of Brazil around the world. These have included:

- The refusal of your President Dilma to meet and dialogue with Dom Erwin Krautler, Bishop of the Xingu, Chief Raoni Metuktire of the Kayapó people, other leaders of indigenous communities and social movements from the Xingu and representatives of Brazilian academia and civil society, regarding the imminent social, environmental and economic disaster posed by Belo Monte. There is an urgent need for Brazil to revolutionize its energy planning based on principles of transparency and participation, social justice, environmental sustainability and economic efficiency;
- Political interventions by the office of the Attorney General (AGU) in a regional federal court (TRF 1) to overturn favorable rulings to civil action lawsuits filed by federal prosecutor's office (Ministério Público Federal) against violations of human rights and environmental law in the licensing of Belo Monte. Such

interventions, based on the false pretenses of threat to national security, have resulted in systematic violations of individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples and other populations threatened by Belo Monte.

- Political intimidation of federal prosecutors and civil society leaders in Brazil who have questioned the illegal practices adopted by the government to steamroll Belo Monte.

- Refusal by the Brazilian government to respect the decision of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), regarding precautionary measures to respect the right to free, prior and informed consultations with indigenous peoples, as required by the Brazilian Constitution and Convention

169 of the International Labor Organization, as well as special measures to ensure the physical and cultural integrity of especially-vulnerable indigenous groups in the region, still living in voluntary isolation.

- In January and June 2011, the issuing of "installation licenses" to commence construction of the Belo Monte dam complex, despite overwhelming evidence of non-compliance with a priori conditions to mitigate social and environmental consequences of this mega-project, as a reflect of continuing political pressures on the federal agencies responsible for environmental protection (IBAMA) and indigenous peoples (FUNAI).

Many respected public figures in Brazil consider the government's obsession in forging ahead with construction of Belo Monte at any cost to be a major assault on democratic institutions in the country that have been constructed at enormous human cost since the military dictatorship, moreover, the steamrolling of the rule of law in the construction of Belo Monte sets an enormously dangerous precedent for dozens of other large dams centrally-planned by the federal government for construction in the Amazon in the near future.

The consequences of the alliance of President Dilma and the her political party with many of the country's most backward and corrupt political elites are currently in the headlines in Brazil. Since June, four cabinet ministers in Dilma's government have been forced to resign as a result of corruption scandals, with new scandals continuing to arise. It is clear that the federal government's obsession with Belo Monte may be linked to the enormous potential of this mega-project to fuel corruption.

These same political alliances are responsible for current threats to the Brazilian Forestry Code which would allow widespread deforestation. Given the political connections between President Dilma's administration with elites that represent large landholders, known as ruralistas, the federal government has been unable to use its political clout to forge coherent alternatives to attacks on the Forestry Code in the Brazilian Congress.

The narrow interests underlying the current onslaught against humanrights and the environment – embodied by Belo Monte and othermega-infrastructure projects within the Accelerated Growth Program (PAC) andthe government's passive stance on attacks to the Brazilian Forestry Code -are the main factors that explain a recent rise of 15% in deforestationrates in the Brazilian Amazon, after several years of considerable decline.The amnesty for illegal deforesters that is coupled with proposed changes tothe Forest Code has also sent a message that unlawful activities will betolerated by the state.

Such factors are also behind the current spate of assassinations against forest guardians and leaders of social movements in the Amazon region. Impunity reigns in the Amazon, with the vast majority of assassinations going unpunished. This has undoubtedly contributed to a growing culture of violence and intimidation.

Meeting the legitimate energy needs of Brazilians does not require the construction of disastrous mega-dams in the Amazon such as Belo Monte. There are better solutions based on energy conservation and efficiency, and power generation from solar, wind and biomass, which will generate more jobs and income among Brazilians. Similarly, it has been proven that the agricultural sector in Brazil can continue to grow without further deforestation, through increasing the productivity of already cleared lands. And clearly Brazil should not tolerate the murder of innocent men and women who fight for the ideals of social justice and environmental sustainability.

Belo Monte, attacks on the Forestry Code, and the assassination of the leaders of social movements represent an "old Brazil", of authoritarianism and corruption. In the 21st century, we believe that Brazil needs to harness its own creativity and energy to create a new path of development, avoiding the mistakes of the industrialized countries.

Clearly, Brazil needs to develop, but along a new path that integrates economic growth and the reduction of poverty with economic efficiency, technological innovation, respect for the human rights of all Brazilians (especially indigenous peoples) and care for its tremendous natural heritage.

In this spirit - and in solidarity with the people of the Xingu and civil society organizations and leaders throughout Brazil - we respectfully call on the Dilma administration to: i) cancel the Belo Monte project and initiate a democratic and sustainable energy strategy for the country, ii) use its political influence in Congress to ensure the integrity of the Brazilian Forestry Code, and iii) take urgent steps to ensure the protection of leaders of social movements that currently suffer death threats, while investigating and duly punishing assassinations and those who have or aim to commit such violent crimes.

Mr. Ambassador, please pass on this letter and communicate our concerns to President Dilma Rousseff and other relevant authorities in Brazil.

Selamatkan Sungai Xingu! Viva o Xingu! Viva a Amazônia! Viva Brasil!

Cordially,

Mr. Islah

Water and Food Campaign Manager  
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On behalf of the submitting individual and organizations:

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