

# Violence threatens Brazil isolated indians

THE MIAMI HERALD  
MAY. 30, 2006

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil** - More than one-quarter of Brazil's isolated Indian tribes face extinction unless the government defines the boundaries and gives them control of their land, a missionary group said Tuesday.

More than 100 Indians have been killed in recent years as loggers, ranchers and farmers have expanded farther into the Amazon rain forest, according to a report by the Catholic Church Missionary Council, known as CIMI.

Of 60 groups that have little or no contact with Western civilization, at least 17 "are under serious risk of death and even extinction," it said.

"There are native people contacted only recently, or rarely contacted, who cannot escape the violence triggered by settlers and the extension of the agricultural frontier," Saul Feats, vice president of CIMI, said at a news conference.

He said CIMI learned about the isolated groups from reports by other Indians.

Feats said that Indians in the southern Amazon states of Rondonia and Mato Grosso have been victimized by people working for land speculators and loggers.

The elimination of Indians in those areas "frees their land for private appropriation aimed at exploiting natural resources," the report said.

Bishop Odilo Sherer, secretary general of Brazil's National Bishops Conference, said the government should define the boundaries of Indian land and give them control over the territory legally granted to them by the 1988 constitution.

Brazil has 345,000 to 550,000 Indians, belonging to 215 tribes and speaking 170 different languages, officials say. Although the population has grown in recent years, it remains a small portion of the estimated 5 million that inhabited Brazil when Portuguese settlers first arrived in 1500.

Brazil's 1988 constitution gave Indians the equivalent of 12 percent of the nation's territory, or 365,425 square miles. But Indian leaders and activists say only a fraction of that land has been effectively demarcated and given to the Indians.