

# More Isolated Indians Survive in Amazon Rain Forest, but Face Peril

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BRASÍLIA, Jan. 17 — Far more Indian groups than previously thought are surviving in [Brazil](#)'s Amazon rain forest isolated from the outside world, but they risk destruction at the hands of encroaching loggers and miners, experts said Wednesday.



An Indian in Rondonia is believed to be the last survivor of his tribe.

A study by Funai, the government's National Indian Foundation, estimates that 67 Indian groups live in complete isolation, up from previous estimates of 40.

“With the rate of destruction in the Amazon, it is amazing there are any isolated people left at all,” said Fiona Watson, campaigns coordinator with Survival International, an advocacy group for tribal peoples.

The foundation reviewed old and new discoveries of footprints, abandoned huts and other signs of human life in the thicket of the Amazon, the world's largest rain forest.

“There are still vast unexplored areas and new indications” of the existence of Indian groups, said Marcelo dos Santos, the director of the foundation department that focuses on isolated Indians.

Brazil probably has the largest number of uncontacted tribes in the world, Ms. Watson said.

With a few exceptions, most of the uncontacted tribes live as they would have when Pedro Álvares Cabral of Portugal became the first European explorer to land in Brazil in 1500. Most hunt with blow guns or bows and arrows, Mr. dos Santos said.

Their lives do not include cars, television sets or microwave ovens.

Anthropologists say most of the uncontacted Indians are likely to know of white men or even have had accidental meetings with them but choose to remain hidden.

An effort during the military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985 sought to integrate Indians into the mainstream culture of Brazil. But the government later adopted a policy of avoiding contact with isolated Indians unless they were in extreme danger.

Envoys from the National Indian Foundation have for years tried to contact a man in Rondonia, a state in the southwestern Amazon forest, because he is believed to be the last survivor of his tribe.

They tried to introduce him to an Indian woman to procreate. But the Hole Indian, as he is called because he lives on branches over a hole, shot arrows at them, sending the potential bride running.

Some isolated groups live on large Indian reserves that are occasionally protected by the federal police. Others obtain little aid to face encroaching wildcat miners and loggers.

This week the federal police and the government's environmental protection agency are to remove hundreds of illegal settlers who invaded the Uru Eu Wau Wau indigenous territory in Rondonia, where uncontacted groups live.

"If we don't expel the invaders now, those Indians won't survive," said Rogério Vargas Motta, an environmentalist.