

YANOMAMI

TIMELINE



1940 - 1960s

First sustained contact with outsiders as Brazilian government sets up guard posts, and Catholic and Protestant missionaries establish presence. Yanomami suffer first epidemics of flu, measles and whooping cough.

1968

Dr. Kenneth Taylor, later to become director of Survival International (USA), starts work with Yanomami. He later co-authors first detailed proposal for a Yanomami Park, for the Brazilian government. It is ignored.

1973 - 1976

Brazil's military government starts to build the northern perimeter highway, penetrating deep into Yanomami land. Two Yanomami communities almost wiped out from diseases introduced by construction workers. Yanomami suffer severe population drop. The partially built highway is abandoned in 1976.

1974

Survival begins to fund health care program with Yanomami in Venezuela.

1975

First invasions by miners searching for tin ore.

1978

Brazilian government proposes to split Yanomami area into 21 separate pockets of land; this would destroy the Yanomami. Under pressure from NGOs supporting the Indians, the plan is shelved.

CCPY (Pro Yanomami Commission) founded in Brazil to defend Yanomami land rights.

1978-1979

Colonists settle near Yanomami land.

1979

Survival asks supporters to lobby Brazilian government for Yanomami land rights. CCPY puts forward new proposal for Yanomami Park.

1980s

News of mining potential in Yanomami land spreads. Invasions increase.

1980

Survival, with two other organizations, makes a formal complaint against the Brazilian government to the Organization of American States (OAS). In 1985, the OAS condemns the government and urges it to create a Yanomami Park.

1982

Survival presents the Yanomami case to the UN.

1984

Survival assists in funding Médecins du Monde in a CCPY vaccination campaign.

1985

First military base built in Yanomami territory. More follow. Soldiers prostitute Yanomami women and spread venereal diseases.

1986

New gold rush begins in earnest.

Yanomami hold first assembly.

1987 - 1990

An estimated 40,000 goldminers are working illegally inside Yanomami territory, spreading malaria and flu. Up to 90 illegal landing strips are constructed. Mercury poisons rivers and fish on which the Yanomami depend.

1987 - 1993

Around 20% of the Yanomami die from infections, malnutrition and malaria brought by the goldminers.

1988

Government decrees that Yanomami land will be divided into 19 separate pockets. 70% of the Indians' land would be excluded. Survival coordinates demonstrations at Brazilian embassies in 20 countries. These are widely televised in Brazil. Vigils continue for the next three years.

1989

Survival is awarded the Right Livelihood Award (the 'Alternative Nobel Prize') and invites Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa to Europe to accept the award on its behalf. This is the first time a Yanomami spokesman has left Brazil. The trip generates huge media and public interest.

At the Yanomami's request, Survival opens a medical aid fund to support CCPY's health care project. For several critical months it is the only funding available.

1990

Government proposes three 'mining areas' in Yanomami territory. The plan is later shelved.

1990s

Under mounting national and international pressure at what Prince Charles calls 'a dreadful pattern of collective genocide', the Brazilian government attempts to expel the illegal miners, but many return.

Survival



1991

President Collor announces the government will demarcate all Yanomami land (9.6 million hectares).

1992

Yanomami territory demarcated just before Brazil hosts the UN's first Earth Summit in Rio. It is the largest single indigenous territory in Brazil. Together with the area inhabited by the Yanomami in Venezuela, it is the largest indigenous territory in tropical rainforest in the world.

1993

16 Yanomami are massacred in the community of Haximú by goldminers. 22 goldminers are arrested.

1995

At the request of Davi Yanomami, CCPY starts a bilingual educational plan, supported by Survival. Its aim is to help Yanomami defend their rights.

1996

5 goldminers convicted of genocide and sentenced to between 19 and 20 years for the May 2012

1999

NGO Urihi created to provide health care to the Yanomami. Some Yanomami trained as health workers. Rates of malaria fall.

2000

Brazilian tribunal upholds right of appeal for miners convicted of genocide.

2003

Expansion of colonist settlements into Yanomami land. Fires caused by slash and burn techniques.

2004

Urihi closes as government takes over healthcare. Chaos ensues. Malaria spreads again.

Yanomami form their own organization, Hutukara.

2006

Brazil's Supreme Court upholds that 5 miners are guilty of genocide for the Haximú massacre.

2007

Davi Yanomami speaks out against proposal in Congress to open up indigenous territories to mining.

2008

Members of Hutukara meet with Health Minister. Later, government announces it will create a new secretariat for indigenous health.

2009

Goldminers murder a Yekuana Indian who refused to take them into the Yanomami territory to mine. Yanomami continue to denounce the presence of around 1,000 goldminers working illegally on their land.

December 2011

Yanomami in Venezuela form their organization, Horonami. FUNAI closes protection post near uncontacted Yanomami community

October 2012

Survival invited by Hutukara to celebrate 20 years since demarcation of territory.

March 2013

Yanomami in Venezuela denounce plans to allow Chinese CITIC group to mine their land.

November 2013

The Falling Sky by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert – the first book by a Yanomami shaman – published.

February 2014

Government launches operation to remove illegal goldminers from Yanomami territory.

December 2014

FIOCRUZ researchers find dangerous levels of mercury contamination in Yanomami and Yekuana communities close to goldmining operations.

November 2016

Hutukara and Survival release photos of uncontacted Yanomami near illegal gold mine

April 2018

Hutukara denounces invasion of 5,000 miners and reports 2 uncontacted Yanomami murdered by miners. Deadly measles epidemic hits communities.

April 2019

Yanomami release video message to Bolsonaro opposing his plan to open up their land to mining. Hutukara estimates there are 20,000 miners there.

'WHY DO I STILL FIGHT? BECAUSE I AM ALIVE. I BELIEVE IN MY FIGHT. I AM FIGHTING FOR THE YOUNG, FOR THE CHILDREN... THAT MY PEOPLE MAY NOT HAVE TO DIE SO YOUNG.' Davi Kopenawa Yanomami