



Jonathan D. Hill, President
*Department of Anthropology
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL 62901 USA
Salsa-tipiti.org*

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Sua Excelência
Presidente Dilma Rousseff
Presidente da República Federativa do Brasil
Gabinete do Presidente
Palácio do Planalto
Praça dos Três Poderes
70150-900 Brasília - DF
Brasil

Dear President Rousseff:

The Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America (SALSA) is an international professional association for anthropologists specializing in lowland regions of South America. SALSA's main goals are to foster sound and ethical research on the peoples and environments of lowland South America, and to promote the education of students and the general public on issues that we study. For the organization, the well-being of lowland South America's vulnerable peoples is of central concern. As anthropologists and regional specialists, we insist on accuracy in scientific research, integrity in interpretation, and defence against misuse of academic writings. We support the efforts of indigenous leaders, organizations, and fellow scholars who focus the spotlight of public attention on the realities of life for native people in lowland South America and elsewhere, in their struggles to secure the rights and resources they need to survive and thrive as indigenous citizens of the 21st century.

It is with great concern that SALSA has learned that the Peruvian, Brazilian, and Chinese governments have signed memoranda of understanding on building a transcontinental railroad network connecting the Pacific coast of Peru with the Atlantic coast of Brazil. The proposed railroad routes—from Bayóvar of Piura or else Ica in Peru to Porto do Açu or else Santos in Brazil—would all cut through the western Amazon in the border region between Peru and Brazil,

one of the largest continuous rainforest areas in the world with relatively intact primary forest and featuring one of the highest biodiversity indexes in the world. This area concentrates the world's largest number of indigenous peoples with little or no contact with outsiders from national societies. For the majority of these indigenous populations, isolation is a lifestyle they have chosen in response to their fatal historical experiences with modern society. Additionally, the route will pass through or otherwise impinge upon demarcated and titled communities and lands of numerous sedentary indigenous peoples, such as the Shipibo-Conibo, Ashéninka, Nukini, Puyanawa, and Yaminawá, among others. The Uruaçu (GO)-Vilhena (RO) segment of EF 354 in Brazil will directly impact the A'uwẽ-Xavante, Iranxe, Nambiquara, Mammaindê, Negarote, Umutina and Pareci, as well as groups located in the southern part of the Xingu National Park, including Kinsede, Yualapiti and Wauja.

Cutting through this unique environment, the proposed railroad and ancillary maintenance and feeder roads and stations will increase colonization pressure and the influx of illegal loggers and other extractive interests, including drug traffickers, into the region. The consequences will be severe for the isolated indigenous groups, for other indigenous residents of the area, and for the biodiversity hotspots of the Ucayali-Acre border zone and the central Brazilian cerrado.

We exhort the Brazilian government to uphold the rights of its indigenous peoples as guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution and respect the international conventions and regulations guaranteeing the rights of indigenous peoples to which it is signatory. These include the ILO Convention 169 (ratified by Brazil in 2002), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). We specifically request that you respond to the following questions concerning Brazil's ethical and legal responsibilities.

- 1) How will the Brazilian government ensure that the indigenous peoples and indigenous organizations in the affected areas are consulted and involved in the process of decision-making concerning the route, the development of the necessary safeguards and impact monitoring systems, and plans for their implementation?
- 2) Will the Brazilian government give serious consideration to the social and environmental impact studies that assess the effects of different routings?
- 3) How exactly will Brazil honor and uphold the processes of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)?

Protected indigenous territories and nature reserves are of immense significance in counteracting global climate change and carbon emissions. Any large project impinging upon such territories and reserves should address its impact in this regard as well.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully,



Jonathan S. Hill
President, Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America

CC:

Secretaría General de la Presidencia de la República de Peru: María Elena Juscamaita Aranguena
(secretariageneral@presidencia.gob.pe)

Ministra de Cultura: Diana Álvarez-Calderón Gallo, Ministerio de Cultura, Gobierno del Perú
(dalvarez@cultura.gob.pe)

Ministro de Transportes y Comunicaciones: Jose David Gallardo Ku (jose.gallardo@mtc.gob.pe)

Viceministra de Interculturalidad: Patricia Jacquelyn Balbuena Palacios
(pbalbuena@cultura.gob.pe)

INDEPA: Jefe de INDEPA: Javier Galdos Carvajal (jgaldos@cultura.gob.pe)

Defensoría del Pueblo: Defensor del Pueblo Eduardo Vega Luna (defensor@defensoria.gob.pe)

Defensoría del Pueblo: Jefe del Programa de Pueblos Indígenas: Iván Kriss Lanegra Quispe
(ilanegra@defensoria.gob.pe)

SERNANP/Ministerio del Ambiente: Jefe de SERNANP: Pedro Gamboa Moquillaza
(pgamboa@sernanp.gob.pe)

FENAMAD: Presidente Klaus Quicque (fenamad@fenamad.org.pe)

FUNAI: Coordenador Geral de Índios Isolados: Carlos Lisboa Travassos
(Carlos.travassos@funai.gov.br)

Assessor para Assuntos Indígena, Estado do Acre: José Carlos Meirelles (couire@gmail.com)

Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA): Presidente: Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima
(aba@abant.org.br)