

U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations

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SPEECH FROM THE LOKONO INDIAN OF SURINAM

When the Spaniards Pinzon and Hojeda tried to force their way into present-day Surinam in 1499, they were driven back to the sea within a short time, The French, the English and the Dutch, however, alternately succeeded in occupying Surinam in the 17th century by committing the most atrocious crimes. In the year 1667, the Dutch became the permanent occupying power. After nine years, this occupying power signed a peace treaty in which the conditions of their residence are stated. It is a grave situation because the Dutch Government did not consult us, the original and legitimate inhabitants of Surinam, at the transfer of sovereignty in 1975.

Five tribes of indigenous people are now living in Surinam; the Kalinjas and Lokonos being the largest among them and also the most deeply integrated in the Surinam community. The long-term warfare between the occupying colonial power and our people have forced the government to acknowledge our right to live in Surinam. This basic right, however, has never been translated into law, which means that the Surinam government can at any time have at their disposal the soil upon which our ancestors have lived for centuries. This has been confirmed by the following events:

- During the Second World War, Surinam bauxite was of great importance to the allied powers. American troops were encamped in Surinam to protect the bauxite mines. The village of Bisri had to be removed for the construction of Zanderij Airport. Neither financial compensation nor a new place to live was offered.
- During the sixties, Pierre Kondre was almost completely parceled out by the political authorities in Paramaribo.
- Washabo, Apura and Sektion, three indigenous villages in the western part of Surinam, no longer exist because they were forced to move for the Western Surinam Project, a development project that failed entirely. The area in question has been claimed by the forest again.



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Questions may be referred to: Director of Research  
Center for World Indigenous Studies  
PMB 214  
1001 Cooper Point RD SW Suite 140  
Olympia, Washington 98502-1107 USA  
360-754-1990  
[www.cwis.org](http://www.cwis.org) <<http://www.cwis.org>>  
[usaoffice@cwis.org](mailto:usaoffice@cwis.org) <<mailto:usaoffice@cwis.org>>

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