

Brazilian Amazon chief Raoni insists that Bolsonaro must go



Brasilia, September 27 (RHC)-- Indigenous chief Raoni Metuktire, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, said that his people would not leave the Amazon and called on Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to step down, a day after the head of state accused him of being a pawn to foreign interests.

A top Indigenous chief in Brazil was welcomed by opposition lawmakers with ovations and tribal chants at the nation's Congress, which he addressed and where he later spoke to reporters through an interpreter.

Raoni became known internationally as an environmental campaigner in the 1980s, advocating against the massive Amazon destruction at that time alongside British musician Sting.

The Kayapo chief has become the symbol of the fight to stop deforestation in the Amazon. A group of environmentalists and anthropologists put his name forward as a candidate for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize for his lifetime defense of the forest.

In his speech Tuesday to the United Nations General Assembly, Bolsonaro insulted Raoni in order to distance himself from international criticism of his slow response to combating fires in the rainforest and made the claim that the Amazon basin was not a world heritage.

“Indigenous leaders like Chief Raoni are often used as pawns by foreign governments in their media war to advance their interests in the Amazon,” Bolsonaro stated to the other world leaders gathered this week in New York.

Bolsonaro wants to develop the Amazon and assimilate its Indigenous people by ramping up mining, logging and monoculture crops within the Indigenous reserves. At the U.N. he accused NGOs of wanting to keep the Amazon tribes living like “cavemen.”

Raoni made it clear his people want to continue living as they always have on the ancestral lands that are increasingly under threat of invasions by illegal loggers, miners and land grabbers since Bolsonaro took office in January.

“My concern is for the environment. Today everyone is worried. My work is to preserve the forest for all, for the survival of my grandchildren, the reservation lands, the indigenous peoples and the environment.”

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