

Brazil's Supreme Court rules in favor of Indigenous communities' land claims

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Brasilia, September 22 (RHC)-- In an historic victory for Indigenous communities, Brazil's Supreme Court has blocked efforts led by agribusiness-backed lawmakers to enforce a time limit for making claims to ancestral territory.

The case argued Indigenous groups were only entitled to land that they physically occupied when the 1988 Brazilian Constitution was signed. Many Indigenous communities were expelled from their ancestral territory over the course of decades, including during the military dictatorship.

Nine of the 11 justices sided with Indigenous peoples, who gathered outside the Supreme Court in Brasília Thursday in an emotional celebration following news of the ruling. Many wept with joy; others danced.

One Indigenous leader, Xainã Pitaguary, told reporters: “We’re getting emotional. We’re happy and we cry because we know that it’s only with demarcated territory, with protected Indigenous territory, that we’ll be able to stop climate change from happening and preserve our biome. We are responsible for it.”

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