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Sister Maria Inês Ribeiro, president of the Conference of Religious of Brazil, meets with Indige

Sister Maria Inês Ribeiro, president of the Conference of Religious of Brazil, meets with Indigenous leaders at the Acampamento Terra Livre 2022-ATL (Free Land Camp) in Brasília April 7, 2022. (CNS/courtesy CRB Nacional)



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SAO PAULO, Brazil — April 13, 2022
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More than 6,000 Indigenous from 172 tribes gathered in Brasília, Brazil's capital, to march in defense of their land and against the policies of the Brazilian government.

Participants in this year's Acampamento Terra Livre 2022-ATL (Free Land Camp), considered the largest Indigenous mobilization in Brazil, want to pressure lawmakers

to reject proposed government legislation that would allow mining and agriculture on their protected lands.

President Jair Bolsonaro, who actively works to open Indigenous land to commercial use, has stated repeatedly that "there is a lot of land for few Indians" and, that if it were up to him, during his term there would be no more demarcation of Indigenous lands.

Along with Indigenous and environment groups, many religious also came out to Brasília to show their support.

"This is a life lesson for all of us, this incessant quest to preserve our original rights," said Archbishop Roque Paloschi of Porto Velho, secretary of the Brazilian branch of the Pan-Amazonian Church Network, or REPAM.

Ubiranan Pataxo plays music during the Acampamento Terra Livre 2022-ATL (Free Land Camp

Ubiranan Pataxo plays music during the Acampamento Terra Livre 2022-ATL (Free Land Camp) protest in Brasília, Brazil, April 4. (CNS/Reuters/Adriano Machado)

Fr. Mauricio da Silva Jardim, national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, told Catholic News Service: "All the bills now being debated in Congress hurt the Indigenous in their struggle for land, for territory. I participated in the ATL's march, defending the rights of Indigenous people to their lands, so that the bills that degrade the culture, the traditions of these peoples do not pass."

Jardim said he felt the strong presence of young Indigenous people at the camp and great hope that this resistance will be heard by Brazilian lawmakers.

"We learned a lot from Indigenous peoples — taking care of the planet, our common home, preserving, not depredating," he added.

Sr. Maria Inês Ribeiro, a member of the Messengers of Divine Love and president of the Conference of Religious of Brazil, was also at the Free Land Camp.

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"We are organizing to have an intercongregational community there in Tapajós, in the state of Pará, to support the Indigenous people of that region," she said at one of

the tents set up at the event by organizers for debates.

"This situation of invading Indigenous lands for agribusiness, for mining, is a great injustice," said Ribeiro.

According to the National Indian Foundation, 672 Indigenous lands have been marked off, and 115 of them are still being analyzed.

The Indigenous were expected to remain in Brasília until April 14.