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Indigenous rights: laws passed by the state of Roraima and the authority to legislate on the matter

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SUMMARY

This article analyzes the legislation produced by the state of Roraima concerning the rights of indigenous peoples, examining it in light of the competence established by the Federal Constitution to legislate on the matter. In 2014, the Supreme Federal Court, when judging Direct Action of Unconstitutionality No. 1,499, established the understanding that it is the exclusive competence of the Union to legislate on indigenous issues. However, the distribution of competences among the federative entities in this field deserves reflection, especially in states that concentrate a significant indigenous population and, in particular, regarding indigenous people who live outside their traditional lands.

Keywords: indigenous rights; legislative competence; state of Roraima; Supreme Federal Court; federalism.

ABSTRACT The

article deals with the legislation produced by the state of Roraima regarding indigenous rights and the scope of competence established by the federal constitution to legislate on the matter. The Federal Supreme Court ruled in 2014, in the judgment of the Direct Action of Unconstitutionality 1,499, that only the Union can legislate on indigenous issues. However, the division of competences between the entities of the federation in this area must be discussed, on the states where most indigenous peoples reside, and especially for those indigenous peoples who reside outside their lands.

Keywords: State indigenous legislation. Legislative competence. Rights of indigenous peoples.

INTRODUCTION

The first results of the 2022 Demographic Census, in partnership with the Foundation.

The National Institute for Indigenous Peoples (Funai) released information concerning indigenous peoples.

Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The survey identified a contingent of

1,693,535 people who self-identify as indigenous, which corresponds to 0.83% of the total population.

Brazilian. According to official data, there is also a significant concentration of this.

The population in the Legal Amazon region, which accounts for 51.2% of the country's total indigenous population. The state of

Machine Translated by Google first Journal The Knowledge. ISSN: 2675-9128. São Paulo-SP.

Year V, v.2 2025 | Submission: 09/11/2025 | Accepted: 11/11/2025 | Publication: 13/11/2025 Roraima has the highest relative proportion of indigenous population in the country, corresponding to approximately 97,320 people who self-identify as indigenous.

This quantity, significant in proportional terms, places Roraima in fifth position.

ranking in absolute numbers, being surpassed by the states of Amazonas (490,854), Bahia
(229,103), Mato Grosso do Sul (116,346) and Pernambuco (106,634) and in first place with regard to
Uiramutã, the municipality with the largest indigenous population in the country, has approximately 96% of its residents who...

They identify as indigenous. In percentage terms, Roraima has the highest proportion of this population.

in relation to its total population, corresponding to 15.29%. Following that, Amazonas appears.

(12.45%), Mato Grosso do Sul (4.22%), Acre (3.82%) and Bahia (1.62%). Added to this is the fact that that the state of Roraima possesses two of the largest indigenous territories in the country in terms of size.

geographically, Yanomami and Raposa Serra do Sol, respectively, and one of those considered to be the most one of the oldest in Brazil, São Marcos, born from the old Royal Farms, established in 1787 (CUNHA, 1993).

These data highlight the significant place of the state of Roraima in the context of diversity.

national ethnicity, especially when considering the relative density of the indigenous population in relation to to the total population of the state. When considering the proportion of indigenous people in relation to the population. For non-indigenous people, it becomes evident that the state needs to act within its competencies. constitutional and administrative measures, develop specific public policies targeted at this segment. In many cases, such government initiatives begin with the issuance of regulations.

legal instruments that function as normative tools to ensure rights and promote inclusion.

social and ensure the implementation of policies aimed at protecting and developing communities.

Based on a survey conducted on the website of the State Legislative Assembly.

In Roraima (ALERR), the existence of 12 Ordinary Laws and 1 Proposed Amendment to the Constitution was verified.

Constitution, 3 draft legislative decrees and more than 10 draft laws in progress, all focused on indigenous issues. It should be noted that most of these proposals were submitted in the year from 2023, which denotes the growing relevance of the indigenous agenda in the state legislative process. recent.

The topic of legislative competence in indigenous matters has already been analyzed by

The Supreme Federal Court (STF), in the judgment of Direct Action of Unconstitutionality No.

In 2014, decision 1.499/DF established the understanding that only the Union has regulatory authority.

to legislate on issues related to indigenous peoples. This decision finds support in

as set forth in Article 22, item XIV, of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which establishes as a competence

The exclusive prerogative of the Union is to "legislate on indigenous populations." In this regard, it is worth highlighting that...

The definition of exclusive jurisdiction seeks to ensure national regulatory uniformity regarding...

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indigenous rights, avoiding legislative fragmentation by subnational entities, which could

To compromise the protection of the ethnic, territorial, and cultural diversity of indigenous peoples.

The understanding of the Attorney General's Office (PGR), expressed in a passage from the vote.

delivered by the then Attorney General of the Republic, Dr. Antônio Fernando Barros e Silva de Souza,

It is expressed categorically:

Now, since the Federal Constitution (article 22, item XIV) grants the Federal Union exclusive competence to legislate on indigenous populations, the state constituent assembly is implicitly prohibited from legislating on the matter. I do not believe that the nature of the rules prescribed in this regard by the State Constitution can influence the prohibition, since the prohibition is objective, that is, it prevents the States from exercising legislative activity (constitutional or ordinary) regarding matters reserved exclusively to the Union, regardless of the content of the rules enacted, which may coincide with or diverge from the objectives foreseen in the Federal Constitution or in federal infra-constitutional norms (ADI 1.499/DF of 2014 - STF).

This position reinforces the interpretation that the prohibition on states is of a certain nature.

objective, that is, independent of the material content of the enacted rule. Thus, even if the legislation

state regulations should seek to converge with or coincide with the objectives of the Federal Constitution or other regulations.

In cases involving federal infra-constitutional legislation, the legal impossibility of innovating on matters reserved for [the relevant authority] persists.

The Union, by virtue of the exclusive competence clause established in article 22, XIV, of the Constitution.

Federal University of 1988.

The laws approved by the State of Roraima that are related to THEME RELATED TO INDIGENOUS ISSUES

In the state of Roraima, there are several ordinary laws that make

These norms refer, directly or indirectly, to issues related to indigenous peoples.

They originate both from initiatives of the state Executive Branch and from proposals authored by...

parliamentarian, highlighting the recurring presence of indigenous issues on the local legislative agenda.

As an example, we can highlight Law No. 279 of 2000, initiated by then-Governor Neudo Campos, which established the State Secretariat for Indigenous Affairs. This legal instrument establishes, in its... text, specific assignments for the secretariat, which demonstrate the institutional concern of state in structuring a body focused on the formulation and execution of public policies aimed at Indigenous peoples, in the following terms:

Article 5.

The State Secretariat for Indigenous Affairs is responsible for:

I – To develop policies and guidelines related to indigenous issues in accordance with the interests of indigenous communities, provided they do not contradict federal legislation and the competencies of other bodies;
 II – To provide educational and health assistance aimed at improving quality of life;
 III – To preserve and disseminate

indigenous culture; IV - To promote sustainable development by stimulating production in indigenous communities.



Law No. 373 of 2003, initiated by then-Governor Flamarion Portela, established and regulated the operation of the Specialized Technical Group for Studies of Indigenous Areas of State of Roraima. This provision, however, was subsequently repealed by Law No. 1,372, of 2020, authored by the current governor Antonio Denarium, which demonstrates significant changes. in the normative structure intended for state indigenous policy.

Similarly, Law No. 864 of 2012, proposed by the then members of parliament, deserves mention.

Jalser Renier and Chico Guerra, which provides for the State Program to Encourage Production in Indigenous Communities and which establishes a series of measures aimed at economic strengthening. of these communities. The aforementioned legal document contains provisions that state as follows:

Article 2. The Program, as set forth in this regulation, has the following objectives:

I - To encourage agriculture and agribusiness among indigenous

communities; II - To promote the transfer of technology for production in different indigenous communities; III - To finance activities that can generate employment, income, and production for the communities involved; IV - To implement food production in indigenous communities for their sustenance, as well as for commercialization; and V - To integrate indigenous communities into the production process, respecting their specific characteristics.

From the analysis of the article above, it is clear that there is a distinct tension with article 22, XIV, of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. which makes the validity of the state law questionable due to a lack of jurisdiction. The scenario reveals the dilemma. A classic example of Brazilian federalism: the Constitution centralizes legislative power in the Union, but Social realities and local political pressure drive states to act, even at risk. of unconstitutionality.

Law No. 942 of 2013, initiated by then-Governor José de Anchieta, established the Program to Encourage and Support Family and Indigenous Agricultural Production in the State of Roraima. establishing the following guidelines as the basis for its implementation:

Article 1. Establishes the Incentive and Support Program for Family and Indigenous Agricultural Production in the State of Roraima, with the objective of:

 ${f I}$ – To strengthen family and indigenous agriculture, promoting its economic and social inclusion, fostering sustainable production; ${f II}$ – To

promote access to food, in sufficient quantity and quality, with the necessary regularity, for family and indigenous farmers; **III** – To support

agricultural production, with the aim of keeping producers in rural areas; IV – To encourage the consumption and appreciation of food produced by family and indigenous agriculture, improving living conditions, generating employment and income in rural

areas; V - To promote social inclusion in rural areas, through the strengthening of family and indigenous agriculture; VI - To strengthen marketing networks for products originating from family and indigenous agriculture and the agro-industry of agricultural products, adding value and complying with sanitary standards.



Law No. 1,818 of 2023, initiated by the current governor Antonio Denarium, changed the name of the State Secretariat for Indigenous Affairs to the State Secretariat for Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples (SEPI), in addition to providing for other related measures. The legislative proposal was forwarded to the Legislative Assembly of Roraima through Government Message No. 17, of In February 2023, the Chief Executive presented the following justification: The change is necessary

because the term "Indian" conveys the idea of individuality, which is not the case, since our state has numerous ethnic groups and the current term ends up restricting the diversity of regional ethnic groups, given that Roraima is the state with the largest indigenous population in the country, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Furthermore, it is everyone's duty to value indigenous culture in its various manifestations and to promote the sustainable development of all Indigenous Communities, whether through stimulating production or preserving and disseminating indigenous culture.

An analysis of Laws No. 864/2012, No. 942/2013, and No. 1,818/2023 reveals...

that such regulations demonstrate an attempt by the state of Roraima to establish a more

It closely aligns with indigenous communities, incorporating into the laws discussions established by the communities themselves. Indigenous communities, such as the production of quality food for subsistence and the issue

of identity self-determination, already present in ILO Convention No. 169 concerning indigenous peoples and

tribal, article 1, paragraph 2, subparagraph b: item 2, where "the awareness of their indigenous or tribal identity

should be considered as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the

provisions of this convention" and in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peoples

Indigenous peoples (2006), article 3, which states that "indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of

Those who exercise this right freely determine their political status and freely pursue their development.

"economic, social and cultural".

In general terms, it is clear that the stated objective of the political agents was to

To strengthen indigenous agriculture, promoting economic and social inclusion, as well as fostering...

Productive sustainability. By establishing programs aimed at encouraging production, transfer

In terms of technology and access to financing, these diplomas sought to integrate indigenous communities into broader production and consumption circuits, encouraging job and income generation in the environment.

rural.

In the sociocultural field, a significant gap is observed: projects and laws do not...

explicit reference to the implementation of public policies considering cultural specificities,

lifestyles and different stages of social organization of indigenous peoples. By standardizing the

Public policy surrounding agriculture and economic production risks disregarding...

cultural diversity and imposing development models that do not engage with diverse worldviews.

indigenous people. This aspect can reduce the social effectiveness of initiatives and even generate internal tensions. in the communities.



Indigenous women's protagonism in the state.

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Law No. 1,877 of 2023, initiated by Representative Dr. Meton, establishes Women's Week.

Indigenous event within the state of Roraima, to be held annually between August 30th and 5th.

September. The regulatory decree aims to raise awareness, value, and promote actions aimed at indigenous women, including events, mobilizations, lectures, debates, meetings, leaflet distributions and seminars aimed at honoring and giving visibility to

From a technical-legislative point of view, the rule falls within the set of laws of a specific nature. programmatic and symbolic, whose main objective is not to create new subjective rights, but to guide The role of public authorities is to foster the participation of society around a specific issue. thematic. By establishing a commemorative week, the law contributes to consolidating policies of cultural recognition and appreciation, in accordance with the constitutional principles of

Cultural pluralism and protection of ethnic minorities (articles 215 and 216 of the Federal Constitution).

From a political and social standpoint, the law is relevant because it contributes to the visibility of Indigenous women, a segment often made invisible in public agendas. By creating a An institutionalized mobilization space on the state calendar, seeking to give greater legitimacy to demands related to gender and ethnicity, enabling not only the holding of events symbolic, but also an opening for the formulation of specific public policies aimed at Indigenous women, such as health, education, protection against violence, and empowerment programs. the role of women in community decision-making processes.

Regarding violence against women, it is worth noting that the state of Roraima has... occupying the top spots in femicide statistics for some time, according to data provided according to the 2015 Violence Map (WAISELFISZ, 2015) and the 2023 Violence Atlas. However, Neither study specifies statistically the percentage of indigenous women who were victims. causing another instance of invisibility, this time regarding ethnicity, which in a society with significant The presence of the indigenous population, as in Roraima, becomes alarming. Therefore, a Week of... Indigenous woman in Roraima creates space to discuss awareness and combat measures against violence against indigenous women, as well as allowing the issue to be identified and observed with the necessary accuracy.

Law No. 2055 of 2024, authored by Representative Soldado Sampaio, recognizes as

The intangible cultural heritage of the people of Roraima includes the indigenous languages spoken in the state, and it is up to them to public institutions promote its dissemination, preservation, and appreciation. Furthermore, it provides for... future recognition of other languages that may be revitalized after its publication.

The following languages were declared co-official alongside Portuguese: Hixkaryana, Ingarikó, Maku, Makuxi, Ninam, Patamona (Kapon), Sanumá, Taurepang (Pemón), Waiwai, Wapixana, Yanomami and Yekwana (Maiongong). Co-officialization does not negate the right to

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Learning the Portuguese language should not create barriers to integration with the community.

non-indigenous, in accordance with the state policy on Indigenous School Education. The law to emphasizing the linguistic diversity that exists in the state creates possibilities for the construction of a multilingual culture, which may lead, among other things, to the promotion of the production of material Educational materials focused on teaching indigenous languages, as well as on training teachers and translators. and interpreters who will work in the various institutions serving the people of Roraima. This comes

In line with the objectives established by the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, from 2022 to 2023, established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019 following demands from peoples

Indigenous people from Bolivia and Mexico who understood the importance of effective and continuous action in In favor of the recognition, appreciation, and preservation of indigenous languages around the world.

In addition to the aforementioned laws, numerous related bills are currently being processed in the assembly.

with regard to indigenous rights, namely: Bill No. 36 of 2023, authored by Representative Armando

Neto, who is creating the State System for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples. Among his proposals, should he be elected...

Once approved, the law will have the following wording:

Article 1. This Law establishes and creates the State System for the Protection

of Indigenous Peoples. § **1.** The State System for the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is considered to be the integrated set of instruments intended, under the terms of this Law, for the defense of the human

rights of indigenous peoples, including: I - The State Ten-Year Plan for

Public Policies for Indigenous Peoples; II - Other mechanisms

resulting from specific regulations. § 2. The guidelines, actions, and mechanisms provided for in this Law direct the complementary actions of the state of Roraima in relation to federal actions and policies that target indigenous provided for in this Law.

Bill No. 38 of 2023, currently archived, initiated by Representative Armando

Neto's bill provided for the acquisition of food products originating from family farming and indigenous communities.

by the bodies and entities of the public administration of the state of Roraima.

Initiated by former congresswoman Lenir Rodrigues, Bill No. 151 of 2022 provides for...

the reservation of places for indigenous candidates in public competitions aimed at filling positions

permanent positions and public jobs that are part of the permanent staff of the direct administration and

Indirectly from the Executive Branch of the state of Roraima. According to the former congresswoman, author of the bill, in her

The justification argues that:

It is worth highlighting that the indigenous population, for the most part, has been facing an accelerated and complex social transformation, needing to seek new answers for its physical and cultural survival and to guarantee a better quality of life for future generations. Among the main problems currently experienced by indigenous communities are conflicts arising from land issues, territorial and environmental invasions and degradation, sexual exploitation, recruitment and use of drugs, labor exploitation, including child labor, and disorderly exodus, causing a large concentration of indigenous people in cities, among others. serious problems.



In order to guarantee the presence of indigenous people in the spheres of public order institutions.

The state of Roraima could also ensure that the specifics of the issues related to

The experience of the aforementioned conflicts in the law may involve the perspective of the indigenous peoples themselves. in mediation or in the resolution of these same conflicts, in addition to enabling social advancement through of formal education.

They are still being processed in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Roraima. various projects that, while not directly addressing the rights of indigenous peoples, maintain indirect relationship with issues that concern them, whether in the cultural, economic, social or field. administrative. It is also noted that several state regulations aimed at regulating the interaction between The State and indigenous communities remain formally in effect, forming a framework. legal framework that, at least in theory, seeks to ensure specific policies for these groups. However, A significant gap is observed: there is a lack of information regarding the effective implementation. of these norms and, above all, regarding their political, economic, and social repercussions in daily life. of indigenous communities.

Direct Action of Unconstitutionality - ADI 1.499/Pará; and possible gaps in the legal system.

Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI) No. 1,499, proposed by the Attorney General of
The lawsuit, filed in the Republic, was based on Article 300 of the Constitution of the State of Pará and the Complementary Law.
No. 31, of February 14, 1996, under the allegation of violation of articles 22, XIV; 129, V; and 231 of
Federal Constitution of 1988. The judgment took place in a plenary session of the Supreme Federal Court.
(STF) on September 17, 2014, when the action was deemed admissible, in the following terms:

Having reviewed, reported on, and discussed these proceedings, the Justices of the Supreme Federal Court, in Plenary Session, under the presidency of Justice Ricardo Lewandowski, in accordance with the minutes of the judgment and the stenographic notes, unanimously decided to uphold the action, in accordance with the opinion of the rapporteur, Justice Gilmar Mendes. Brasília, September 17, 2014. Justice GILMAR MENDES Rapporteur.

The reporting judge, in delivering his vote in ADI No. 1,499, concluded that the constituent power A body derived from the member states cannot legislate on the matters listed in Article 22 of the Constitution. Federal, as these are matters reserved for the exclusive competence of the Union. He further emphasized that,

In this case, it must be acknowledged that the constituent legislator of the state of Pará, in legislating on matters pertaining to indigenous populations, encroached upon the exclusive competence of the Union specifically provided for in Article 22, XIV, of the Constitution. Article 300 of the Constitution of the State of Pará, notwithstanding its relevant material content, suffers from formal unconstitutionality.



Thus, the Supreme Federal Court (STF) established that normative production

matters relating to indigenous populations fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Union, in accordance with the law.

Article 22, XIV, of the 1988 Federal Constitution. The Supreme Court's decision, by its very nature, was predominantly legal: the Court limited itself to the analysis of formal constitutionality, not encompassing

social, political, economic, or sociological aspects related to the indigenous issue, since such

The elements were not part of the subject matter of the claim. In short, the Court ruled on the claim in light of...

Constitution of the Republic, based on the wording of article 22, XIV, established by the original constituent assembly. from 1988.

However, after more than three decades of the Federal Constitution being in effect and almost five decades since the enactment of the Statute of the Indian, Law No. 6,001/1973, it is observed that the legal relations, Social, political, and economic relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples have evolved significantly. generating new challenges that require reinterpretations and updates to regulations.

In this context, it becomes essential to broaden the debate beyond the formal dimension of legislative competence, taking into account regional peculiarities and analyzing how the states — such as Roraima, which has the highest proportion of indigenous population in the country — They have been implementing public services, social policies, and inclusion mechanisms aimed at this. a minority segment of the population. This reflection is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of policies. public issues and the capacity of Brazilian federalism to respond to cultural specificities and territorial rights of indigenous peoples.

The jurist Thimotie Heemann presents a relevant reflection on the role of the legislator in normative production relating to indigenous rights and the need for their revitalization and Update. According to the author:

Within the scope of Indigenous Peoples' Law, the movement to interpret domestic norms based on international treaties and conventions ratified by the Brazilian State is even stronger and more visible, given that the main law on the subject in Brazil was enacted more than forty years ago. It is evident that, over time, all domestic legislation becomes obsolete and must therefore be updated by the Legislative Branch. However, in the area of Indigenous Peoples' Law, the Brazilian legislature seems to show no interest or concern in correcting the asymmetries and gaps caused by the passage of more than four decades since the enactment of the Statute of the Indian.

This analysis reinforces the finding that the Indian Statute, Law No. 6.001/1973, although

A pioneer in its time, it has failed to keep pace with constitutional, jurisprudential, and international developments.

that has occurred in recent decades, especially after the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution and the ratification of instruments such as ILO Convention 169. Thus, the need becomes evident.

There is an urgent need for legislative action that promotes the harmonization of the internal order with the international commitments and that it responds adequately to social, cultural and policies experienced by indigenous peoples in Brazil.

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The debate surrounding legislative competence regarding the rights of indigenous peoples is marked by a tension between the normative centralization of the Union, foreseen in article 22, XIV, of The 1988 Federal Constitution, and the concrete demands of the federated states, especially those located in the Legal Amazon, which concentrates the largest part of the country's indigenous population.

On one hand, the Supreme Federal Court has consolidated its understanding that jurisdiction

Legislation concerning indigenous populations is the exclusive prerogative of the Union, as reaffirmed in precedents.

paradigmatic examples, such as ADI 1.499/DF. Along these lines, states and municipalities cannot innovate.

In terms of regulations, this would constitute usurpation of power and formal unconstitutionality. On the other hand...

On the other hand, there is the concrete reality, especially in states like Roraima, Amazonas, and Mato Grosso do Sul.

This highlights that state government is often the first entity called upon to provide solutions.

effective in meeting the demands of health, education, agricultural production, food security and development. sustainable practices for indigenous communities.

We can translate this debate as needing to be directed towards a solution that involves the creation of Cooperative mechanisms between the Union, states, and indigenous peoples, in order to allow legislation federal regulations should be complemented by state regulations of an operational and administrative nature, respecting the exclusive competence of the Union, but guaranteeing the effectiveness of rights. This demonstrates that the need for a new national legislative framework that takes into account cultural plurality and the social transformations after 1988, as well as the active participation of indigenous communities.

In summary, although current jurisprudence imposes restrictions, the sociopolitical reality Brazilian legislation points to the need to revisit the model of exclusive competence of the Union, of in order to recognize a more active role for states, especially in regulatory enforcement and administrative public policies aimed at indigenous populations. This is an agenda that It requires legislative, constitutional, and intercultural dialogue as a condition for building a A more inclusive federalism that is responsive to the demands of indigenous communities.

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