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## [Bolivia: For the protection of the last isolated indigenous peoples](#)

We recently received a publication released in 2008 by FOBOMADE and Rainforest Foundation Norway, written by Pablo Cingolani, Álvaro Díez Astete and Vincent Brackelaire and entitled “Toromonas. La lucha por la defensa de los Pueblos Indígenas Aislados en Bolivia” (Toromonas: the struggle for the defence of the Isolated Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia), which presents an exhaustive account of the situation of isolated indigenous peoples in the region.

Among the various articles that make up the publication, we would like to highlight one that addresses the Bolivian government’s adoption of Resolution 48, a historic measure in defence of an isolated indigenous community:

“The government of Bolivia, headed by the first indigenous president to ever take power in the country, Juan Evo Morales Ayma, adopted on 15 August 2006 a historic resolution with regard to the situation of the last indigenous peoples living in isolation in Bolivian territory. Through this resolution, the president declared as an Absolute Reserve Area the lands encompassed by the Madidi National Park and Integrated Management Natural Area (PNANMI). Madidi, a national protected area that spans almost 19,000 square kilometres and is one of the planet’s most important reservoirs of biodiversity, is home to one of the last peoples living in isolation in Bolivia and the world: the presumed descendants of the Toromona people (see WRM Bulletin No. 105), who cut off all contact with Bolivian society in the early 20th century in order to escape the genocide of the rubber boom era.

“This was the first time in the history of the Bolivian republic – in which major first nations peoples such as the Aymara, Quechua and Guaraní coexist – that the Bolivian state has taken action to address the issue of indigenous peoples living in isolation, initial contact and/or situations of extreme vulnerability.

Within the complex and colossal issue of indigenous reality, it is currently believed that there are at least nine ethnic groups or segments of ethnic groups living in isolation in Bolivia, although there are none classified as living in ‘initial contact’.

“The isolated communities for which there are varying degrees of evidence, but which are all believed to exist, are the following:

- \* Department of La Paz: Toromona, Araona, Ese Ejja
- \* Department of Santa Cruz: M’bya Yuki, Ayoreode
- \* Department of Pando: Pacahuara
- \* Department of Beni: Yuracaré, T’simanes, Mosetene

“In this new country that we are striving to build, repairing the damages of a hidden and forgotten

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genocide, healing historic wounds, moving past scandalous omissions, the adoption of Resolution 48 and the consequent creation of an absolute reserve for the protection of an indigenous community living in isolation in the Amazon rainforest is not only a historic landmark. It also represents the possibility of building, at the same time, a platform for effective action by the plurinational and intercultural state being established on the basis of the constituent assembly to save these peoples from extermination and guarantee their human rights.

"Resolution 48 – which represents the crystallization of years of work around the situation of the people living in isolation within the borders of Madidi National Park – sets a strategic precedent for the protection of isolated indigenous peoples in Bolivia, and should serve as a much-needed visible and practical platform for future government actions that draw not only on national power and commitment but also on the widespread international solidarity regarding this issue, since the last isolated indigenous peoples in Bolivia are also some of the last isolated indigenous peoples in the world.

"In addition to the resolution to create an absolute reserve area to protect the isolated indigenous people of Madidi, there are also a series of actions underway to support and strengthen mixed-raced communities in the surrounding area, as a way of ending their tragic dependence on a predatory economy which, at the same time, represented the main threat to the ethnic group that is to be protected through the resolution adopted.

"From the perspective of an integrated vision and the search for the projection of democratic intercultural communitarianism within the state and society as a whole, these isolated indigenous peoples – who live in total interdependence with the land they occupy, where biodiversity has been preserved through ancestral balance – have become an archetype of the new socio-state paradigm. Not only can we consider them a cultural treasure, but also as a living testimony and reflection of the fact that another society, one that is more humane, more sound and more creative, is possible."

Extracted and adapted from "Zona de Reserva Absoluta Toromona: una medida histórica del gobierno de Evo Morales Ayma hacia una política nacional de protección integral de los últimos pueblos indígenas aislados de Bolivia", by Álvaro Díez Astete and Pablo Cingolani, an article in "Toromonas. La lucha por la defensa de los Pueblos Indígenas Aislados en Bolivia", written by Pablo Cingolani, Álvaro Díez Astete and Vincent Brackelaire and published by FOBOMADE and Rainforest Foundation Norway in 2008. Available at: [http://www.cebem.org/admin/cmsfiles/publicaciones/Toromonas\\_.pdf](http://www.cebem.org/admin/cmsfiles/publicaciones/Toromonas_.pdf)