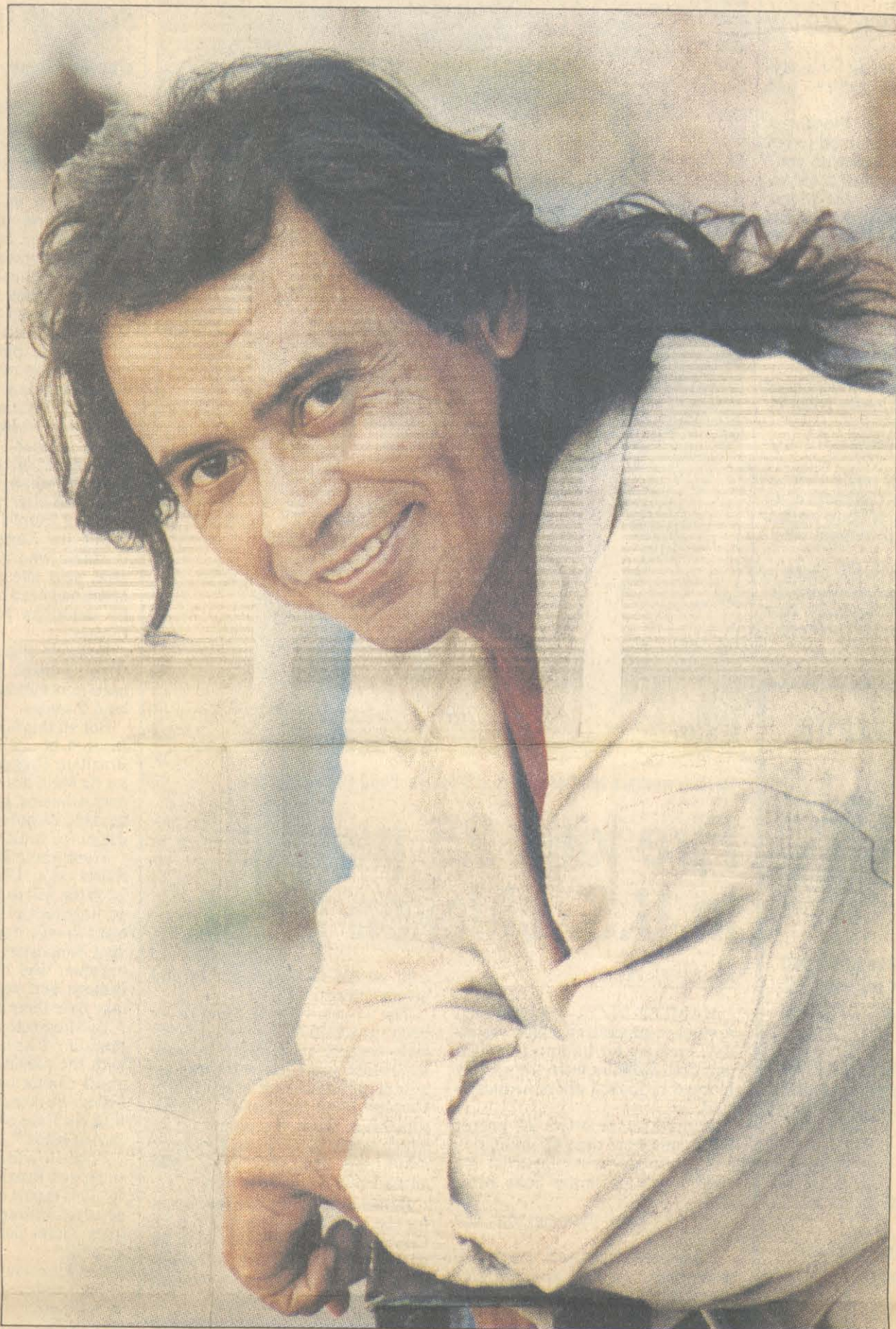


Povos Indígenas no Brasil

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Brazilian Indian wins refugee status



GAZETTE, ALLEN MCINNIS

Native leader Tiuré is believed to be the first Brazilian Indian granted refugee status by any nation.

Canada grants asylum to native activist
Ruling shows Brazil 'guilty of criminal acts,' he believes

ALEXANDER NORRIS
 THE GAZETTE

In what is believed to be the first case of its kind in the world, a Brazilian native-rights activist living in Montreal has been granted political asylum in Canada.

Tiuré, 42, a Potiguara Indian from Paraíba state in northeastern Brazil, was awarded refugee status in a decision by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board last Thursday.

The native leader, who uses only one name, told the board he had been tortured by federal police and threatened with death by gunmen because of his outspoken defence of aboriginal causes. The Canadian refugee tribunal found his testimony credible, ruling that Tiuré

had a well-founded fear of persecution should he return to Brazil.

Tiuré, who arrived in Montreal last November, said yesterday that he intends to use the ruling to draw greater international attention to Brazil's human-rights record and the plight of its aboriginal people.

"For the first time, a jury of international standing has recognized that Brazilian Indians are suffering persecution, death threats and extermination," he said.

"To me, this ruling signifies that the Brazilian government has been found guilty of criminal acts.

"I am a living witness of the atrocities committed against Brazilian Indians — acts that are committed under the cover of a democratic facade."

Officials in a leading Brazilian

Indian-rights organization confirmed that the ruling appears to mark the first time a foreign court has taken note of the repression suffered by Brazilian Indians.

"As far as we're aware, he is first indigenous person from Brazil to be granted refugee status anywhere in the world," said Eduardo Leao, spokesman for the Conselho Indigenista Missionario, a group affiliated with Brazil's Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The ruling "will have the effect of demonstrating clearly that Indians are being persecuted in Brazil," added Fabio Villas, the organization's executive secretary, in a separate telephone interview from Brasilia.

Tiuré told the board that arson-

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