

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 19/009/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 115
5 July 2002

Brazil: Justice beckons in Espírito Santo

The historic decision by members of the Ministry of Justice's Human Rights Council to recommend federal intervention in the state of Espírito Santo, is a crucial step in the battle against organised crime, human rights violations and impunity in Brazil, Amnesty International said today.

Years of killing, violence and corruption attributed to the police organization *Scuderie Detetive le Cocq* (SDLC), and to powerful economic and political groups in the state, have long gone unpunished.

The decision underlines the fundamental failures of the state authorities to investigate the systematic human rights abuses which have taken place over so many years in Espírito Santo, and the high levels of corruption which permeate the executive and the legislative in the state.

The organization recognises that today's decision could not have been achieved without the unremitting struggle of the state's human rights community against entrenched impunity and in the face of consistent death threats, intimidation and attacks.

The decision to fully implement intervention by the federal state will now fall to the Federal Attorney General (*Procurador-Geral da República*) and the Federal Supreme Court. Amnesty International urges them to use this opportunity to guarantee the human rights of all Brazilians.

Amnesty International hopes that this decision leads to the prosecution of those responsible for the killings of among many others, Father Gabriel Maire, Jean Alvez da Cunha, Carlos Batista, José Maria Feu Rosa, Paulo Damião Tristão, Valdicio Barbosa dos Santos and Marcelo Denadai.

Background:

In 1997 the Brazilian Congress opened a Federal Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into drug trafficking. At least a quarter of the final report was dedicated to the situation in Espírito Santo, with indictments against people in positions of power including the president of the legislative assembly, high ranking judges, and powerful members of the police for various crimes ranging from homicide to tax evasion. Three years after the 1999 publication of these findings, no state police or state judicial investigation has been initiated on the basis of this information.

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