

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 65/91 (AMR 19/06/91, 22 February 1991 and Follow-up, AMR 19/08/91, 8 March 1991) - Death Threats

BRAZIL: Carlos CABRAL PEREIRA
Roberto NETO da SILVA
Orlando CANUTO

Amnesty International has learned with concern of the Minister of Justice's stated intention to withdraw Federal Police protection from Carlos Cabral Pereira, Roberto Neto da Silva and Orlando Canuto, rural union leaders of Rio Maria, Pará state.

On 22 February 1991 Amnesty International expressed its concern for the safety of the above mentioned union leaders, together with that of Father Ricardo Rezende, from the same township, who have been receiving repeated death threats. (see UA 65/91, AMR 19/06/91 and AMR 19/08/91, 22 February and 8 March 1991). Amnesty International's concern for their safety followed the assassination on 2 February 1991 of Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the Rural Workers Union of Rio Maria (see UA 40/91, AMR 19/02/91, 6 February 1991). Three men have been arrested and are awaiting trial, charged with his crime.

Following strong domestic and international pressure the Brazilian Government granted Federal Police protection to Carlos Cabral Pereira, Roberto Neto da Silva and Orlando Canuto, and Military Police protection to father Ricardo Rezende, but the situation in Rio Maria has since remained very tense.

On 4 March 1991 Carlos Cabral Pereira and Roberto Neto da Silva were shot at from behind the local cemetery wall, near the spot where João Canuto de Oliveira, a former president of the same union of which Carlos Cabral is president, was killed in 1985. A man was detained and charged with the shooting but subsequently released on 13 August 1991. On 21 August 1991 six gunshots were allegedly fired at the home of father Ricardo Rezende by an unknown gunman. On 26 August 1991 three gunmen, among them one charged with the murder of two brothers of Orlando Canuto on 22 April 1990 and the other an important witness in the same incident, escaped from the prison of Curianopolis, a township near Rio Maria.

Against this background it was reported that the Federal Police informed Carlos Cabral Pereira, Roberto Neto da Silva and Orlando Canuto of its intention to withdraw their protection from 3 September 1991. The decision has not yet materialized, allegedly because of the intervention of the Attorney General's Office. Amnesty International believes that continuous police protection is still essential for the personal safety of the rural union leaders as well as of father Ricardo Rezende.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members and leaders of rural trade unions representing peasants and their families in southern Pará have been the targets of death threats, assaults, abductions and killings. Expedito Ribeiro de Souza was the fourth leader of the Rio Maria Union to be murdered since 1985. Among the murdered are the father and two brothers of Orlando Canuto. While Amnesty International takes no

position on competing claims in land disputes, it is concerned that gunmen allegedly acting on behalf of landowners have carried out intimidation and killings of peasants, their leaders and advisers with a high degree of impunity. The Brazilian authorities on all levels have persistently failed to take effective action to prevent or investigate the killings or to bring those responsible to justice.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters:

- requesting special police protection for Carlos Cabral Pereira, Roberto Neto da Silva, Orland Canuto and father Ricardo Rezende to be continued.
- urging an inquiry into the shooting at the home of father Ricardo Rezende.
- expressing concern at the escape of José de Ribamar Rodrigues Lopes, José Ubiratam Matos Ubirajara and Marivaldo Ribeiro da Silva from the prison of Curianópolis on 26 August 1991 and urging an inquiry into the incident.

APPEALS TO:

Sr. Ministro de Justiça do Brasil
 Sr. Jarbas Passarinho
 Ministério de Justiça
 Esplanada dos Ministerios
 Bloco 23
 70.064 Brasilia DF, Brazil

Telegrams: Ministro Justiça, Brasilia, Brazil
Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR; 611088 MNJU BR;
6122313 MNJU BR
Faxes: + 55 61 224 4357

Sr. Governador do Estado do Pará
 Sr. Jáder Barbalho
 Palacio Lauro Sodré
 Praça D. Pedro II
 66.000 Belém, PA, Brazil

Telegrams: Governador Pará, Belém, Brazil
Telexes: 911012 GOPA BR or 916978 GOPA BR

Sr. Secretário de Segurança Publica
 Estado do Pará
 Sr. Alcides Alcantara
 Rua 28 de Setembro 339
 66.020 Belem, PA, Brazil

Telegrams: Secretario de Segurança Publica,
Belém, Brazil
Telexes: 911100 SSPB BR

COPIES TO:

Pastoral Land Commission:

Comissão Pastoral da Terra
 Rua 14 de Abril N. 1400
 Centro Social Sagrado Coração de Jesus

Caixa Postal 21
Conceição do Araguaia
CEP 68.540 Pará, Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 October 1991.