

UA 319/01

Fear for

BRAZIL Roberto Monte (Human Rights Defender)
Plácido Medeiros de Souza (Police Chief)

Human rights activist Roberto Monte and civil police chief Plácido Medeiros de Souza have both received death threats. The threats are apparently linked to their investigation into the murder of a lawyer by a death squad, many of whose members are civil police officers. Their lives are in grave danger.

Roberto Monte works at the *Centro de Direitos Humanos e Memoria Popular*, Centre for Human Rights and Collective Memory, based in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, in northern Brazil. He and Plácido Medeiros de Souza had been investigating the October 1996 murder of lawyer Gilson Nogueira Carvalho, who had been working for a special commission on an investigation into the activities of a death squad when he was gunned down outside his home (see EXTRA 49/99, AMR 19/08/99, 6 April 1999 and UA 300/99, AMR 19/28/99, 16 November 1999).

As part of their investigation both men have recently filed official complaints about the activities of a death squad known as the *Meninos de Ouro* (the Golden Boys). The *Meninos de Ouro* are believed to have killed up to 80 people, and tortured many others, in Rio Grande do Norte since the 1990s. Some members of the death squad are civil police officers. According to an independent investigation carried out by the public prosecutor's office into the killing of Gilson Nogueira Carvalho, the *Meninos de Ouro* enjoy the protection of the Rio Grande do Norte state authorities.

In October and November this year Plácido Medeiros de Souza and a person who wishes to remain anonymous received a number of anonymous phone calls warning that someone was planning to kill both Roberto Monte and Plácido Medeiros de Souza.

One of the prime suspects for the murder of Gilson Nogueira Carvalho, who is also believed to be involved in death squad activity in Rio Grande do Norte, is civil policeman Jorge Luis Fernandes, who is serving a 47-year prison sentence. He should be held in a secure prison, but he is now detained in a civil police station. He is still involved in organising contract killings, and is even able to leave the police station twice a week for family visits.

Plácido Medeiros de Souza is a local police chief (*delegado*) in Rio Grande do Norte state civil police. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organisation of American States has called on the Brazilian government to provide federal police protection for him and Roberto Monte. The government has reportedly not yet provided such protection to either man. The Inter-American Commission has also called on the Brazilian government to transfer Jorge Luis Fernandes to a maximum security prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Brazil are vulnerable to death threats, intimidation, and attacks by police, hired gunmen and death squads which operate with the acquiescence of the state.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Portuguese, English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to investigate the reported death threats made to Roberto Monte and Plácido Medeiros de Souza;
- urging the authorities to follow the recommendation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and provide both men with federal police protection;
- urging the Rio Grande do Norte state authorities to transfer civil policeman Jorge Luis Fernandes from the police station where he is reportedly held illegally, to a maximum security prison;
- expressing concern at the reported links between the *Meninos de Ouro* death squad and the Rio Grande do Norte state authorities, and calling on both the Federal and Rio Grande do Norte state authorities to investigate and dismantle this and all other known death squads;
- urging the Brazilian government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, and the Organization of American States *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution.

APPEALS TO:

State Governor Rio Grande do Norte

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Rio Grande do Norte
 Sr Garibaldi Alves Filho
 Centro Administrativo da Governadoria
 Lagoa Nova
 59064-901 Natal, RN - Brazil

Fax: + 55 84 206 4752

Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

Rio Grande do Norte Public Security Secretary

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública do
 Estado de Rio Grande do Norte
 Anísio Marinho Neto
 Secretaria de Segurança Pública
 Praça Augusto Severo, N°261, Ribeira
 59012-380 Natal RN - Brazil

Fax: + 55 84 232 1093

Salutation: Sr. Secretário/Dear Secretary

Federal Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça do Brasil
 Dr. Aloysio Nunes Ferreira
 Ministério da Justiça
 Esplanada dos Ministérios
 Bloco 'T', 4° andar, Sala 400
 70064-900 Brasília, DF, Brazil

Fax: + 55 61 322 6817/225 0289

Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

Secretary of State for Human Rights

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Estado dos Direitos Humanos
 Paulo Sergio Pinheiro
 Secretaria de Estado dos Direitos Humanos
 Ministério da Justiça
 Esplanada dos Ministérios
 Bloco T, 4° andar, Sala 420

70064-900 Brasília, DF, Brazil

Fax: + 55 61 223 2260/226 7980

Salutation: Sr Secretário/ Dear Secretary

COPIES TO:

Centro de Direitos Humanos e Memória Popular

Rua Vigário Bartolomeu, 635

Ed. 21 de Março, Sala 607

59023-900, Natal, RN, Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 January 2002.