

UA 134/00

Death thro

BRAZIL Brother Henri de Rosiers, 70]
Anilson Russi] human rights defenders
Ana de Sousa Pinto]and lawyers
Airton dos Reis Perreira]

A priest has been named on a "death list" drawn up by a death squad believed to operate with the acquiescence of the police. Amnesty International believes that he and the other church mission staff named above are in grave danger.

Frei (Brother) Henri de Rosiers, works as a lawyer for the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT), Pastoral Land Commission, in Xinguara, in the south of Pará State. This area has long been the focal point for the killings of land activists by local landowners, which go unpunished for many years. The CPT, which is administered by the Catholic church, has worked tirelessly against these killings, and for the defence of land activists. Their work has brought them into conflict with landowners and their supporters in positions of authority.

Brother Henri is the prosecution lawyer in the forthcoming trial of a powerful local landowner, accused of ordering the killing of land activist Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the *Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais* (Union of Rural Workers), who died on 2 February 1991 in Rio Maria, Pará. The trial has become a symbol of the CPT's conflict with the landowners and their fight against impunity. The trial has raised fears that CPT staff and especially Brother Henri may face retaliation.

The CPT learned of the "death-list" from four separate sources. The news follows the killing of five people near the town of Xinguara, between 4 - 6 May 2000. Some of those killed are believed to have appeared on the "death-list". Two of the corpses had their ears cut off, indicating a death squad killing on commission.

The CPT has also campaigned against police torture, ill-treatment and subsequent impunity in the south of Pará, and this has made them the target of death threats. Their campaigns have led recently to increased denunciations, further calls for intervention by the Federal and State authorities, visits by national and foreign human rights delegations and wider media coverage of the situation. However the Pará authorities have consistently failed to stop the mounting violence in the region, and this has led the CPT and other organizations to call on the Federal authorities to intervene.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Brother Henri was named on a similar "death-list" in 1994, together with Father Ricardo Rezende and other CPT workers. The threats forced Father Ricardo Rezende to leave the state.

Amnesty International has been working in collaboration with CPT members in the south of Pará for many years. The CPT have been tireless in their efforts to publicise the high levels of violence perpetrated with total impunity. They have also supported many victims, and relatives of victims, through legal procedures that can last many years. Dedicated work by Amnesty International members has helped the CPT to maintain pressure on both the Federal and State authorities to investigate the violence perpetrated in the region and bring those responsible to trial.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Portuguese or your own language:

- calling for an immediate investigation into the alleged "death-list" naming Frei Henri and other people in Xinguara;
- expressing concern at apparent death squad activity in the south of Pará and calling for a full investigation;
- expressing concern at the high level of violence in the south of Pará and allegations that police are at best acquiescent, if not directly involved in torture and killings;
- noting the failure of the Pará state authorities to deal with the violence over many years;
- reminding the federal authorities of their duty to ensure that human rights violations are investigated and punished, wherever they occur in Brazil;
- 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 Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* adopted on 9 December 1998, and the Organization of American States *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution adopted on 7 June 1999 [AG/RES. 1671 (XXIX-O/99)].

APPEALS TO:

Governor Pará State

Exmo. Sr. Governador do
Estado do Pará
Sr. Almir José de Oliveira Gabriel
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Salutation:Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça
do Brasil
Dr. José Gregori [4/00]
Ministério da Justiça
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco 23
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Salutation:Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Pastoral Land Commission

Comissão Pastoral da Terra
Rua Pau Brasil 40
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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 6 July 2000.