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## Eldorado de Carajás massacre: Brazilian justice on trial -- all truth and responsibilities must be established

"The Eldorado de Carajás trial is a test for Brazilian justice," Amnesty International said today following the opening day of the trial proceedings.

"The case bears all the sad hallmarks of a Brazilian massacre -- police acting as if they had a licence to kill, inadequate investigations, and the failure of the authorities to respond appropriately to the gravity of the violations," the organization said.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that police appear to have approached the demonstrators with an intent to commit violations -- their identification tags had been removed, and their guns were not registered to their users.

"There are many levels of responsibility for the tragedy of Eldorado de Carajás, and it is essential that issues of political responsibility, chains of command and individual acts of violence are fully explored by the court."

Several of the men killed were known leaders of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST). Autopsies revealed that some had been killed in execution-style shootings. Others had been hacked to death with their own farm tools.

Amnesty International was present at the investigations immediately following the massacre, and found them to be seriously flawed.

The human rights organization is reiterating its call for those police charged with the massacre to be suspended immediately pending trial. At present, all remain on active duty.

### **Background**

The largest trial in Brazilian history began yesterday in the Amazonian state of Pará. Some 100 policemen face charges for the killing of 19 land reform activists in April 1996 while clearing a demonstration from a highway. The trial is expected to last several months.

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