

UA 311/98

Fear for safety / Death threats

11 December 1998

BRAZIL Vera Lúcia dos Santos (f)

Jadir Inácio

Sandoval Silva Sena

Survivors and relatives of the victims of the Vigário Geral massacre

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Vera Lúcia dos Santos, Jadir Inácio and Sandoval Silva Sena who have all recently received death threats. Vera Lúcia dos Santos and Jadir Inácio had just testified at the trial of ten ex-policemen accused of being involved in the Vigário Geral massacre of 1993 in which 21 residents of the Vigário Geral *favela* (shanty town) were killed. The death threats have also raised concerns for the safety of other survivors and relatives of the victims of the massacre.

On 28 November 1998, the ex-policemen were acquitted of involvement in the Vigário Geral *favela* massacre in Rio de Janeiro on 29 August 1993. The families' and survivors' lawyers have appealed against the acquittal.

On the morning of 4 December, a number of telephone calls were made to the Vigário Geral residents' association. In the first call, taken by Nilda Inácio, (the wife of Jadir Inácio), a man threatened that "the killing will start again." In subsequent calls the man reportedly threatened to "tear off Vera's head" and "roll Jadir up in electrical tape" - a slang expression for killing someone.

Amnesty International is concerned that the threats may be in connection with the relatives and survivors pursuit of justice and compensation. Vera Lúcia dos Santos lost eight members of her family during the massacre, and Jadir Inácio was shot and feigned death to survive. A trial observer delegated to represent Amnesty International at the recent trial reported that threatening statements were made to the press by the policemen following their acquittal.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In August 1993, a group of hooded armed men attacked the Vigário Geral *favela*, shooting indiscriminately at residents. The attack was reportedly carried out in revenge for the killing, two days earlier, of four military policemen. Following official investigations, charges were brought against 33 military policemen with links to the *Cavalos Corredores* (Running Horses) death squad. These charges were thrown into doubt after conversations between jailed policemen, naming those involved, were secretly recorded and submitted as evidence. Ten ex-policemen were acquitted in November on the basis of this evidence.

Two military policemen have been convicted of involvement in the massacre in previous trials. However, their convictions were recently ruled unsound by Brazil's highest legal authority, the Federal Supreme Court. It found that the Rio de Janeiro court in which they were convicted had been in error in trying and sentencing them for a number of separate crimes rather than one continuous crime (*crime continuo*). Both men are now eligible for a new jury trial.

Amnesty International believes that the acquittal of the ten policemen in November exposes serious flaws in the investigation of human rights violations in Brazil and in the judicial system. More than five years after the massacre the families and survivors have still not seen a single sound conviction of the perpetrators and have not received a penny in compensation.

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

- expressing extreme concern for the safety of Vera Lúcia dos Santos, Jadir Inácio, Sandoval Silva Sena and relatives and survivors of the Vigário Geral massacre following death threats made against them;
- calling on the authorities to provide protection to Vigário Geral residents receiving death threats in connection with the 1993 massacre;
- calling on the authorities to immediately investigate the threats and to bring to justice those responsible;
- expressing dismay that more than five years after the massacre the families have still not received any compensation, nor have they seen a single sound conviction of the perpetrators;
- calling upon the authorities to ensure that the families' and survivors compensation claims are processed without delay.

**APPEALS TO: (please note that fax machines in Brazil are often unreliable)**

President, Federative Republic of Brazil  
 Presidente da República Federativa do Brasil  
 Dr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso  
 Gabinete do Presidente  
 Palácio do Planalto, 3º andar  
 Brasília, DF  
 CEP 70150 900 Brazil

**Telegrams: Presidente, Brasília, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 61 226 7566**  
**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/ Your Excellency**

Secretary of Justice, Rio de Janeiro  
 Secretário de Justiça  
 Exmo Sr Secretário de Justiça do Estado de Rio de Janeiro  
 Desembargador Jorge Lorette  
 Rua Barão itambí 60, 9º Andar  
 22231-000 Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

**Telegrams: Secretário Justiça, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 21 551 3748 (if voice, say "sinal de fax por favor")**  
**Salutation: Sr. Secretário / Dear Secretary**

Public Security Secretary, Rio de Janeiro  
 Secretário de Segurança Pública  
 Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública do Estado de Rio de Janeiro  
 Dr. Noaldo Alves Silva  
 Av. Presidente Vargas, N° 817, 15ºandar, Centro  
 20231-110 Rio de Janeiro RJ, Brazil

**Telegrams: Secretário Segurança Pública, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 21 252 8252 (if voice, say "sinal de fax por favor")**  
**Salutation: Sr. Secretário / Dear Secretary**

**COPIES TO:**

Casa da Paz -- Vigário Geral Community Centre  
 Rua Antônio Mendes, 13  
 Vigário Geral  
 21010-690, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

Secretary, Human Rights Secretariat

Exmo. Sr. Secretário dos Direitos Humanos  
Dr. José Gregori  
Secretário Nacional dos Direitos Humanos  
Ministério da Justiça, Esplanada dos Ministérios  
Bloco T, Anexo II, 2º Andar  
70064-900 Brasília, DF, Brazil

**Faxes: + 55 61 225 0440 (if voice, say "sinal de fax por favor")**

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 22 January 1999.