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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - BRAZIL, CUBA (this item is for response only)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Pakistan - 27 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94 - We are sending the report out via Swift air so it should reach you in time for the release date.

Myanmar - 20 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 99/94

India - 16 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 129/94

Kosovo - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - second week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Sri Lanka - 15 July - SEE NS 146/94

Brazil - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

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ONE YEAR AFTER CANDELARIA MASSACRE - WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAMME STILL URGENTLY NEEDED IN BRAZIL

One year after the Candelária massacre and the witnesses remain abandoned by the state and municipal authorities, without protection or a place of safety, Amnesty International said today.

This Saturday marks one year since seven street children were gunned down and killed and another youth fatally wounded outside the Candelária church in Rio de Janeiro, where over 50 were sleeping rough. The killings known as 'the Candelária massacre' provoked a national and international outcry.

Of ten court witnesses, two are in state institutions, three remain on the streets, and a further five have returned home or left the city.

This week the human rights organization received confirmation that a further 40 children thought to have witnessed the massacre remain sleeping on the streets scattered throughout Rio de Janeiro, where they have been the target of death and bomb threats allegedly by members of the military police. Amnesty International has repeatedly submitted the names of these children to the Rio de Janeiro authorities but has received no response about their safety and welfare.

In a letter to mark the anniversary of the massacre, one of the court witnesses has written "I am very sad and hurt by those people who gave their word and said they would help us, and today they won't even look us in the face and pretend that nothing happened."

Amnesty International welcomes the progress in the investigation and judicial proceedings in which three military policemen and one civilian have been indicted and further charges are expected against others.

"But, one of the most fundamental ways of ensuring that the cycle of impunity for human rights crimes is broken in Brazil, is to ensure that witnesses can feel confident to come forward. Yet in case after case witnesses are abandoned -- some have been killed for their courage," said Amnesty International.

"If in a case as much in the spotlight as Candelária, the state and municipal authorities feel no moral and legal obligation to provide a place of safety for witnesses to crimes by state agents, it is time for the federal government to set up a national witness protection programme."

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CUBA: EXCESSIVE FORCE BY COASTGUARDS MAY HAVE CAUSED DEATHS OF ESCAPING CUBANS

About 40 people -- including women and children -- reportedly drowned while attempting to leave Cuba illegally last week when their stolen tugboat sank.

The survivors allege that they were rammed by four Cuban government boats chasing them, and that coastguard officials sprayed water-hoses onto the tug, causing a build-up of water inside the boat and adding to the risk of sinking.

"If these reports are true, then the amount of force used was totally unwarranted and may have caused the many drownings", Amnesty International said today.

The Cuban authorities have announced that there will be a full investigation into the incident. Amnesty International is urging them to ensure that the investigation is complete and impartial and that its findings be made public. If the investigation reveals that anyone committed an offence, they should be brought to justice and given a fair trial.

In a statement released at the weekend, the authorities claim the tugboat was old and leaking and accuse the passengers of damaging communication equipment inside Transport Ministry buildings before putting out to sea.

According to the government statement, the tugboat collided with another boat trying to intercept it. Four other official vessels in the vicinity immediately intervened to join the rescue effort but because of navigational and weather conditions, they were only able to pick up 31 survivors, the communique states.

These people were taken to Havana where some 20 male survivors were reportedly detained at State Security headquarters. One female survivor lost several relatives in the incident and made statements to foreign journalists about what happened. She was reportedly detained afterwards for several hours.

The human rights organization is also calling for the release of any survivors detained as a result of the incident unless they are charged with a recognized criminal offence. No reprisals should be taken against survivors who speak out about what happened, Amnesty International said.