

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible Extrajudicial Execution

23 June 1993

BRAZIL

Amancio Francisco DIAS (Rural Union Leader)

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Amnesty International is concerned about the death of Amancio Francisco Dias, 41, president of the Rural Workers Union of Belém de Maria, who was killed on 14 June 1993 in Pernambuco state, Brazil, in circumstances that indicate that he may have been the victim of an extrajudicial execution.

According to the information received by Amnesty International Amancio Francisco Dias, father of 10 children, was shot in his house in Belém de Maria. In the evening of 14 June, at around 20:00, two men called on his home alleging that they had just been dismissed from a sugar cane plantation in the region and needed some advice. When Amancio Francisco Dias' wife opened the door the gunmen opened fire hitting Amancio Francisco Dias in the face. He died immediately from the wounds.

Belém de Maria, with 11,000 inhabitants, employs almost 4000 men and women in the sugar cane plantation industry. Amancio Francisco Dias had been president of the rural workers' union for just two years. Reportedly he was one of the most active union leaders in what is known as "Zona da Mata" (the sugar cane area of Pernambuco State). Recently, acting as union president, Amancio Francisco Dias had been putting pressure on some refinery owners to pay outstanding debts to the workers. He had allegedly been receiving death threats in the weeks before his killing.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Land disputes between peasants, smallholders and landowners and conflicts over rural workers' conditions are an endemic source of violence in Brazil. Over 1,000 peasants and their supporters are reported to have been killed since 1980, the vast majority of them by hired gunmen, known as *pistoleiros*, employed by landowners or aspiring landowners (See Amnesty International: Brazil: Authorized Violence in Rural Areas (AMR 19/16/88, September 1988).) Very rarely have the killers been detained or brought to justice. The Assistant Attorney General of the Republic is reported to have stated early this month that of the 173 cases of rural murders being investigated by the Attorney General's Department, in which gunmen were paid to commit crime, 72 proved to have the direct participation of military policemen, while 8 others involved members of the civil police.

Harassment, threats and killings have been more recently targeted at union leaders and their advisers. According to the Federation of Agricultural Workers of Pernambuco, Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado de Pernambuco, (FETAPE), which reportedly represents 250,000 rural workers in the state, in the last seven years over 50 trade unionists have been murdered in the state of Pernambuco, among them six this year alone.

Among those killed this year, reportedly in land or work related conflicts in Pernambuco were Artur Rufino dos Santos, killed in January 1993, allegedly for having testified in court in favour of a fellow worker on a labour dispute; 17 year old Ednaldo Severino da

Silva, killed on 14 May 1993 in the municipality of Vicência, allegedly for trespassing; and labour lawyer Márcia Maria Eugênio de Carvalho, on 29 January 1993, in the municipality of Bonito. At the time of her death Márcia Maria Eugênio de Carvalho was working in a number of court cases on behalf of rural workers against local landowners. Reportedly she had been advised by fellow lawyers to take extreme care due to the fear of reprisals from landowners whose interests she may have affected. On the day of her assassination by unknown gunmen Márcia Eugênio de Carvalho was returning to Caruaru from the town of Barra de Guabiraba where she had met several rural workers to whom she was giving legal advice. More than 80 work registration cards, *carteiras profissionais*, belonging to workers being defended by Márcia Eugênio de Carvalho were found in her car. To Amnesty International's knowledge nobody has been charged with her death.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in English, Portuguese or your own language:**

- urging that an immediate and effective inquiry be carried out into the death of Amancio Francisco Dias, that those found responsible for his death be brought to justice and that his family be adequately compensated;
- urging the state authorities that all necessary steps be taken to ensure that killings of this kind do not continue to be carried out with impunity;
- requesting to be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) State Governor of Pernambuco

Exmo Sr. Governador do  
Estado de Pernambuco  
Sr Joaquim Francisco  
de Freitas Cavalcante  
Palácio Campo das Princesas  
Praça da República  
50.000 Recife - PE  
Brazil

**Telegrams: Governador Pernambuco, Recife-PE, Brazil**

**Faxes: + (55) (81) 424 4671**

**Telex: 811029 gopebr**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

2) State Secretary for Public Security

Exmo Sr Secretário de  
Segurança Pública do  
Estado de Pernambuco  
Dr Augusto Carlos Diniz Costa  
Rua Aurora No 487, Boa Vista  
50.000 Recife - PE-  
Brazil

**Telegrams: Secretário Segurança Pública, Recife-PE, Brazil**

**Faxes: + (55) (81) 421 2070**

**Salutation: Dear Secretary**

**COPIES TO:**

Agricultural Workers Federation of Pernambuco

Federação dos Trabalhadores na  
Agricultura do Estado de Pernambuco  
Rua Gervásio Pires 876  
Recife - PE -  
Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country. The World Conference on Human Rights is being held in Austria this month and you can enhance the power of your appeals by also sending copies to the diplomatic representative of Brazil in Austria during June at the following address:

Brazilian Embassy:

The Ambassador  
Botschaft der Föderativen Republik Brasilien  
Lugeck 1/V/15, 1010 Wien  
Austria

**Faxes: + 43 1 513 83 74**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 July 1993.