

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 19/03/92

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UA 55/92 "Disappearances" and Death Threats

17 February 1992

BRAZIL:

"Disappearances":

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Domingos MENDES CARDOSO (Peasant)  
João (surname unknown) (Peasant)

Death Threats:

Atanagildo de DEUS ("Gatão") (Trade Union Leader)  
Expedito PINHEIRO de CASTRO (Peasant)

Amnesty International is concerned about the reported "disappearance" on 4 January 1992 of two peasants, Domingos Mendes Cardoso and João (surname unknown), in the region of Pimenteira, near Marabá, state of Pará. Amnesty International is also concerned about reported death threats against Atanagildo de Deus, "Gatão", leader of Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura, Federation of Agricultural Workers, FETAGRI, and Expedito Pinheiro de Castro, a peasant, who were demanding that the "disappearances" be properly investigated.

On 8 January 1992 the wife of Domingos Mendes Cardoso reported to the police that her husband had been missing since 4 January. The delegado, police chief, of Marabá police station allegedly told her that he would not be able to go to the place of the "disappearance" until the following week. Local people reported that on 5 January, armed guards from a nearby fazenda, estate, detained two peasants, tied them up and took them back to the estate where they are alleged to have been beaten up. Peasants living nearby reportedly heard 2 shots and later saw two bodies being taken away by the gunmen.

Witnesses reported the incident to the police, who opened an inquiry, but have failed so far to find the bodies of the alleged victims. The whereabouts of Domingo Mendes Cardoso and João have not been established. During the course of the police investigation, which local human rights organizations claim was not properly conducted, the owner of the estate where the alleged killings took place is reported to have made death threats against Atanagildo de Deus "Gatão" and Expedito Pinheiro de Castro who were pressing for a thorough inquiry. The threats were reportedly made in front of the police authorities, who do not appear to have taken steps to protect the two men or to question the landowner. The landowner is also reported to have threatened the witnesses of the incident.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Peasants, members and leaders of rural trade unions representing peasants and their families in Pará have been the targets of death threats, assaults, abductions and killings in the context of disputes with local landowners. While Amnesty International takes no position on competing claims in land disputes, it is concerned that gunmen allegedly acting on behalf of landowners have carried out intimidation and killings of peasants, their leaders and advisers with a high degree of impunity. The Brazilian authorities on all levels have,

in the vast majority of cases, failed to take effective action to prevent or investigate the killings or to bring those responsible to justice.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail letters:**

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of Domingos Mendes Cardoso and João on 4 January 1992 and requesting that their cases should be thoroughly investigated and their whereabouts disclosed;
- requesting that the authorities ensure the safety of the witnesses to enable them to testify without fear of reprisal;
- requesting that the reported death threats against Atanagildo de Deus "Gatão" and Expedito Pinheiro de Castro be thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice.

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**APPEALS TO:**

1) Minister of Justice:

Exmo Sr Jarbas Passarinho  
Ministro da Justiça  
Ministério da Justiça  
Esplanado dos Ministerios  
Bloco 23

70.064 Brasilia DF, Brazil

**Telegrams: Ministro Justiça, Brasilia, Brazil**

**Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR**

**Faxes: + 55 61 224 4357**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

2) State Governor of Para:

Exmo Sr Jáder Barbalho  
Governador do Estado do Para  
Palacio Lauro Sodre Para  
66.010 Belem PA Brazil

**Telegrams: Governador Para, Belem, Brazil**

**Telexes: 911012 GOPA HR or 916978 GOPA BR**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

3) State Secretary of Public Security:

Sr Secretario de Segurança Pública do Estado de Para  
Sr Alcides Alcantara  
Rua 28 de Setembro 339  
66.020 Belem, PA Brazil

**Telegrams: Secretario Segurança Pública, Belem, Brazil**

**Telexes: 911100 SSPB PR**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Attorney General's Office:

Dr Alvaro Ribeiro da Costa  
Procuradoria Geral da Republica  
Secretaria de Coordenação de Defesa  
dos Direitos Individuais e dos Interesses Difusos  
Avenida L2 Sul, SG AS 603, Lote 23 S.328  
Brasilia, DF, Brazil

human rights organization:

Sociedade Paraense de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos

Núcleo Marabá

Rua 5 de Abril 498,

Caixa Postal 277,

CEP 68500 - Marabá - Pará, Brazil

**Faxes: 55 91 321 1680**

- and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 March 1992.