

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 19/10/91

Distr: UA/SC

UA 119/91 Fear of Extrajudicial Execution/Death Threats

2 April 1991

BRAZIL: José ALVES DE SOUZA
Antonio FERNANDES PEREIRA
Isaias MENDOÇA ARAUJO

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of José Alves de Souza, Antonio Fernandes Pereira and Isaias Mendonça Araujo, all rural trade unionists from Sitio Novo, Tocantins, Brasil.

On 7 March 1991 José Alves de Souza was shot in the backgarden of his house in the "São Jorge-Sucavo" settlement in the township of Sitio Novo in the region known as Bico do Papagaio (Parrots'Beak) in the North of Brazil. José Alves de Souza was reportedly wounded in his hands, legs and back. He was taken to hospital and is recovering from his wounds.

When the president of the Rural Workers Union of Sitio Novo reported the assassination attempt, the local police delegate allegedly told him that they should beware because, in addition to José Alves de Souza, two other rural trade unionists and settlers of the same estate, Antonio Fernandes Pereira and Isaias Mendonça Araujo, were also on a death list. Neither of them has yet received police protection and nobody has yet been detained in relation to the attempt against the life of José Alves de Souza. Tension in the region remains high and church workers have left the area for their own safety.

This is the second attempt on the life of José Alves de Souza. The first one took place on 21 October 1985. He was wounded together with another peasant, Antonio Raimundo de Sousa Silva, while a third one, Luis Mendes Carvalho was killed. No one has been detained in relation to this shooting.

The "São Jorge-Sucavo" settlement is part of a larger estate partially expropriated by the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agraria (INCRA), National Institute of Settlements and Agrarian Reform. Land disputes between the settlers and neighbouring landowners are heightened by the lack of clear demarcation of land boundaries.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Parrots' Beak has one of the worst records of rural violence in the whole of Brazil. While Amnesty International takes no position on competing claims in land conflicts, it is concerned that gunmen allegedly acting on behalf of landowners have carried out intimidation and killings of peasants, their leaders and their advisers with impunity. The Brazilian authorities on all levels have persistently failed to take effective action to prevent or investigate the killings or to bring those responsible to justice.

page 2 of UA 119/91

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

-requesting that special police protection be immediately provided for José Alves de Souza, Antonio Fernandes Pereira and Isaias Mendoça Araujo;

-urging that the inquiry into the shootings of José Alves de Souza be effectively carried out and that those found responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Sr. Ministro de Justiça do Brasil
 Sr. Jarbas Passarinho
 Ministério de Justiça
 Esplanada dos Ministerios
 Bloco 23
 70.064 Brasilia DF, Brasil (Minister of Justice)

Telegrams: Ministro Justiça, Brasilia, Brasil
Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR; 611088 MNJU BR; 6122313 MNJU BR
Faxes + 55 61 224 4357

Sr. Governador do Estado de Tocantins
 Sr Moisés Avelino
 Palacio do Governo,
 77000 Palmas-To, Brasil (State Governor of Tocantins)

Telegrams: Governador Tocantins, Palmas-To, Brasil

Sr. Secretario de Segurança Publica
 Sr Julho Resplande Arauno
 Secretaria de Segurança Publica
 77000 Palmas-To, Brasil (Public Security Chief, Tocantins)

Telegrams: Secretario Segurança Publica, Palmas-To, Brasil

COPIES TO

Comissão Pastoral da Terra
 Araguaia Tocantins
 Rua Juscelino Kubitschek (rua 5) n. 634
 Caixa Postal 134
 Curupi
 CEP 77400 Tocantins, Brasil (Pastoral Land Commission)

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your section office if sending appeals after 14 May 1991.