

URGENT ACTION

GUNMEN THREATENING COMMUNITY DETAINED

Police detained five gunmen who had been patrolling the quilombo community of São José de Bruno in Matinha, Maranhão State. Around 20 families from the community were being threatened and intimidated by a local rancher who hired at least one gunman to try to push the quilombo community members off the land.

On 19 December 2014, local police detained five gunmen that were armed and patrolling the community of São José de Bruno in Maranhão State. One of them was arrested and charged. He was released on bail a few days later, but will face charges for threatening the community.

This followed a judge's ruling in favour of the community based on a petition filed 14 October 2014 by the Rural Workers Union, requesting the state take action to protect the community's land from encroachment. Subsequently, the local rancher who was attempting to encroach upon the community's land left the region.

In July 2014, a local rancher encroached upon part of the São José de Bruno community territory, where he deforested part of the area and fenced it off, thus preventing some of the quilombo community families from growing their crops on the land, and released cattle in the area. After several attempts by community members to protest against the illegal actions of the rancher, he placed a gunman to patrol the area. The rancher also verbally threatened some community members and said that he intended to take over the land, that it belonged to him and that "it could even result in deaths".

Residents of São José de Bruno reported that they feel safe again now that the gunmen have been detained and the rancher has left the region.

No further action is required from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 268/14. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR19/012/2014/en>.

Name: Quilombo community of São José de Bruno

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 268/14 Index: AMR 19/001/2015 Issue Date: 30 January 2015

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