

UA 33/00

Fear for

**BRAZIL** Marcos Luideson - Indigenous leader (21)  
Zenilda Maria de Araújo - his mother  
Members of the Xucuru community

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Marcos Luideson (known as Marcinhos), leader of the Xucuru indigenous community, and his mother, Zenilda Maria de Araújo (known as Dona Zenilda), who have reportedly been threatened with death. Amnesty International also fears for the safety of approximately 1000 members of the Xucuru community who have been blocking access to a public highway since 28 January in a protest over land rights.

Marcinhos, recently selected leader of the Xucuru, is the son of Francisco de Assis Araújo (known as Chicão), the Xucuru leader killed by gunmen on 20 May 1998 (see *Brazil: Indigenous leaders marked for death - The killing of Francisco de Assis Araújo*, AMR 19/15/98). Due to his high profile position, Marcinhos has apparently become a focus of the many death threats the Xucuru receive, believed to come from local landowners. In a recent incident at the Xucuru road block, a landowner told protesters that Marcinhos would not live as long as his father had. The Xucuru at the roadblock were also told, apparently by a local landowner, that there would be "another Eldorado de Carajás" there (a reference to the April 1996 massacre of 19 landless workers by military police in the state of Pará).

The Xucuru community is blocking access to the PE 219 highway, near the municipality of Pesqueira, Pernambuco state, in protest against part of their tribal lands being sold off to local landowners while the lengthy process of demarcation, by which the government officialises their constitutional rights to the land, is still underway. Without the land which has been sold off the community will have no access to water. Amnesty International has further been informed that after local landowners made an official complaint to a judge a troop of military police in full riot gear came to the road block and ordered the Xucuru to leave.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Francisco de Assis Araújo (Chicão) was a vocal campaigner for the rights of Brazil's indigenous population, and received death threats because of this from 1989 until he was killed in 1998. Other Xucuru leaders have also been threatened, including Dona Zenilda, Chicão's wife, apparently by local landowners and their sympathisers. To this day nobody has been charged with the killing of Chicão.

The Xucuru have been contesting the rights to their land for many years now. The land was set aside for demarcation in 1992, but since then around 272 counter claims have been made against this demarcation, further delaying the completion of the process by the federal authorities. Amnesty International takes no side in disputes over land. However the organization has repeatedly expressed its concern at the level of human rights violations against indigenous people in Brazil that these disputes have led to, including assaults, targeted killings and massacres. Amnesty International believes that the authorities' failure to arbitrate promptly in disputes between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities leaves the indigenous groups vulnerable to attack.

Amnesty International has also followed with concern the frequent resort to excessive force by military police ordered to disperse or evict indigenous communities or peasants occupying land in Brazil. In some cases there has been evidence that military police extrajudicially executed peasants after they had surrendered (see *Brazil: Corumbiara and Eldorado de Carajás - rural violence, police brutality and impunity*, AMR 19/01/98, January 1998). Only federal police are authorized to take action in matters involving indigenous peoples, but military police have been deployed illegally in other disputes.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Portuguese or your own language:**

- expressing your concern for the safety of Marcos Luideson (Marcinhos), Zenilda Maria de Araújo (Dona Zenilda) and all members of the Xucuru indigenous community following threats against them, and calling on the federal government to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern that military police have approached the roadblock, and reminding the authorities that indigenous affairs are a federal responsibility;
- noting your concern given the pattern of violence against indigenous and landless communities protesting for their land rights;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the dispute is swiftly resolved without resort to violence;
- noting that indigenous groups are particularly vulnerable to violent attacks where there is uncertainty over the legal status of their territory;
- urging the federal government to arbitrate promptly in land disputes in order to reduce the risk of violence.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça do Brasil  
 Dr. José Carlos Dias  
 Ministério da Justiça  
 Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco 23  
 CEP 70064-900 Brasília - DF Brazil

**Telegrams: Minister Justice, Brasília, Brazil**

**Faxes: + 55 61 224 2448 / 322 6817**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

State Governor Pernambuco

Exmo. Sr. Governador de Estado de Pernambuco  
 Jarbas de Andrade Vasconcelos  
 Palácio Campo das Princesas  
 Praça da República,  
 50010-040  
 Recife - PE  
 Brazil

**Fax: +55 81 424 4671**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

President, FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio - National Indian Foundation)

Exmo. Sr. Presidente da FUNAI  
 Dr. Carlos Frederico Marés de Souza Filho  
 SETS Quadra 702/902  
 Edifício LEX, 3 andar, Bloco A  
 70340-904 - Brasília - DF - Brazil

**Faxes: + 55 61 226 8782**

**COPIES TO:**

Indigenous Rights Organization  
Conselho Indigenista Misionário (CIMI)  
Rua Treze de Maio, 288 - Santo Amaro  
50100-160 - Recife - PB - Brazil

Newspaper

Diário de Pernambuco  
Diretor de Redação  
Praça da Independência 12, 2º Andar,  
50010-300 Recife - PE - Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 March 2000.