

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 19/006/2004

25 May 2004

Further Information on UA 08/03 (AMR 19/001/2003, 09 January 2003) Fear for safety

**BRAZIL**            **Dr Elma Novais (f), Lawyer**  
                         **Jefferson José de Freitas (m)**  
                         **Roxana Novais (f), aged 14**

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*"Thank you from my heart, I received your letters, a gesture of comfort and humanity, uniting strength to try and save our lives. The struggle has been difficult since I denounced the murderers of my son. We have suffered a lot of hardship and aggression, and have all been the target of much violence and threats. But thanks to the support of each one of you, I will carry on, in order that justice may be done, and that other children will not be killed and that such crimes will not go unpunished."*

**Dr Elma Novais**, to members of the Urgent Action network

In January 2003, Urgent Action letter-writers sent thousands of appeals on behalf of Dr Elma Novais and her children Jefferson and Roxana, following a campaign of threats and intimidation against them. This campaign appeared to be designed to intimidate Dr Novais, who had been working tirelessly to bring to justice those responsible for killing her son, Josenildo João de Freitas Júnior. He was shot dead in Caruaru, Pernambuco in 1999 by a group of men who witnesses described as military policemen, and who were believed to be members of a death squad.

After the UA was issued, Dr Novais' protection was switched from 12 to 24-hour. Although she and her family have continued to receive some veiled threats and have been the target of some intimidating behaviour since, they have remained safe. In June 2003, Dr Novais won an appeal hearing against the release of the four policeman accused of murdering her son, and they were re-imprisoned.

The Pernambuco state authorities have recently admitted the existence of death squads, and have begun investigations into 62 other killings believed to be the result of death squad activity in the state. Dr Novais' courage in refusing to give into threats and intimidation, and the continued legal pressure that she has applied have been pivotal in achieving this. She has recently received two awards for her work as a lawyer.

**Thankyou to everyone who wrote letters. No further action from members of the Urgent Action network is required at present.**