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Further information on UA 75/84 (AMR 19/03/84 29 March, AMR 19/04/84 13 April) –
Hunger-strike/Legal Concern

BRAZIL: Juvêncio Mazzarollo

Prisoner of conscience, Juvêncio Mazzarollo, a journalist, was released from detention in Curitiba on 6 April 1984 after serving eighteen months of a four year prison sentence under Articles 42 and 33 of the (unamended) Law of National Security. He had staged a hunger-strike in protest against his continued detention.

Juvêncio Mazzarollo was released following a review of his case before the Superior Federal Tribunal. Amendments to the Law of National Security approved by the Brazilian Congress in December 1983 reduced both the number of offences and the penalties under this legislation, and cases involving abuse of press freedom (for which Juvêncio Mazzarollo was sentenced) are no longer dealt with under the Law of National Security in a military court but are heard before civil courts.

Amnesty International has received a letter from Juvêncio Mazzarollo himself stating:

"I am enclosing a personal letter and a letter from the Comitê (The Juvêncio Mazzarollo Committee for the Repeal of the Law of National Security) thanking you for all the support and solidarity during the period of my detention under the Law of National Security.

I received thousands of letters from Amnesty International and I would have liked to send everyone a copy of these two documents, but for financial reasons I am not able to do so. Therefore I would ask you the favour of sending copies to each section of Amnesty International in as many countries as possible, asking them to pass on the documents to all members of your organisation.

I would like to once again express my recognition for the inestimable help given by Amnesty International to me personally and to our cause.

Sincerely

Juvêncio Mazzarollo"

Juvêncio Mazzarollo enclosed two documents with this letter, one from the Juvêncio Mazzarollo Committee for the Repeal of the Law of National Security, and one from himself.

"The Release of Juvêncio Mazzarollo – a collective effort

The Juvêncio Mazzarollo Committee for the Repeal of the Law of National Security considers the release of Juvêncio a collective effort in which all people, all democrats, society and the church, working together, demonstrated their capacity to obtain justice.

We must also tress and praise the efforts of the lawyer Antonio Carlos Neto who, in all humility, gave his best towards this collective victory.

We are enormously grateful to all those who, at local, state, national and international level, and in difficult times, gave moral and material support and solidarity. These comrades, in

particular the young people who staged a hunger-strike in support, will remain permanently inscribed in our memory.

At this time it is just that we should select as a symbol of all those who participated in this struggle, the person of Teotonio Vilela who during a visit to Juvêncio stated "Your presence here is a reminder for all the world that in Brazil people are still detained for crimes of conscience". When the Supreme Federal Tribunal unanimously ordered his release it recognised the injustice committed against Juvêncio.

It is important that such lessons be learnt so that sacrifice is not made in vain and so that it contributes towards the complete freedom of our people and the strengthening of our institutions. It is vital that we remain united in the continuing struggle.

Juvêncio Mazzarollo Committee for the Repeal of the Law of National Security"

The following is a letter from Juvêncio Mazzarollo himself:

"A Victory for the People and for Justice

On the afternoon of 6 April 1984 when the news that the Superior Federal Tribunal had ordered my immediate and unconditional release arrived from Brasília, a member of the solidarity committee in Curitiba left work and, together with a large delegation, came to meet me, weeping with joy "because with my release so many efforts and frustrations had finally resulted in a victory worth celebrating". This statement was a true summary of the happiness shared by everyone.

I was in prison for eighteen months and I was the last political prisoner in Brazil. The reason for my imprisonment and the circumstances which prolonged it were an intolerable situation for the country. Many people contributed towards my release and I am sure that no-one hesitated to play their part.

When the normal means of struggle seemed to me to have been exhausted I launched a final offensive – an indefinite hunger-strike. I launched the harsh challenge of "freedom or death" placing my conviction in the fact that society and justice would never permit a tragic ending. It was a call for justice and for social and political harmony since all democrats and all those working for human rights were imprisoned with me. Through me everyone was trying to secure a little more freedom.

Churches, popular organizations, grass roots committees, professional associations, political groups and international bodies supported me. It is impossible to name them all but in this letter I wish to express to each individual and to each organization my profound gratitude at a national level the Comitê in Curitiba and at an international level to Amnesty International.

My gratitude is inexpressible to all those who supported me whether it be with a gesture of bringing me an apple, a flower, a book or a word of comfort in prison or whether it be with more eloquent evidence or legal defence.

We have closed the doors of political prisons in Brazil and we wish them to stay closed forever. However, the road towards freedom and dignity in Brazil remains long. Authoritarianism and arbitrary behaviour characterise Brazilian legislation and institutions. It is important not to forget those who continue to be threatened in the exercise of their legitimate rights. Serious wounds remain open in Latin America. We must cure them.

We have lived under 20 cruel years of repression in Brazil. Now the way remains to honour the blood of our martyrs in our conduct, recognising that only in justice, fraternity and in rational discussion can we create a better world."