

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Threats

26 February 1991

BRAZIL: Tania Maria SALLES MOREIRA (f)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Dr Tania Maria Salles Moreira, public prosecutor of Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro state. Although she reportedly has been receiving telephoned death threats at work and at home for some time, these threats have increased markedly since 9 February. Callers allegedly said her time had come and they would do away with her. Police chiefs in the region have reportedly warned her to take precautionary measures.

Tania Maria Salles Moreira has become well known in the state of Rio de Janeiro because of her prosecutions of members of death squads that allegedly kill minors and young adults. She appeared in a documentary film about killings of children in Brazil that was broadcast in the United Kingdom in January.

When Tania Maria Salles Moreira requested police protection from the state secretary of public security after receiving the threats, it was allegedly denied. After newspaper stories appeared about the refusal, protection was offered to her on her way to work and on her way home.

In January Brazil's Health Minister gave a speech in Rio de Janeiro in which he charged that businessmen were funding death squads and promised prosecutions. Two men were arrested in Duque de Caxias soon after. Tania Maria Salles Moreira is prosecuting one of them, known as "Pedro Capeta," who is allegedly the chief of a local death squad. However, he may be released because witnesses have retracted statements that he had threatened them.

The new governor of Rio de Janeiro state will take office on 15 March, and his nominated Secretary of Public Security has reportedly said he will move forcefully against death squads. However, until that time, it is feared that death squads will take the opportunity to act against those who, like Tania Maria Salles Moreira, try to hinder their activities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Increasing crime in Brazil's big cities appears to have stimulated the growth of death squads during the past three to four years. Hundreds of people, including almost 500 children and adolescents, were killed by death squads in Rio de Janeiro state in 1990. Duque de Caxias, a town on the periphery of Rio de Janeiro city, is said to be a centre of death squad activity. There is evidence that local police have given support to these groups or even participated in their activities. Such groups are said to kill witnesses as well as suspects and petty criminals. People who draw attention to their activities or try to hinder them have received threats. Few death squad members have been arrested or prosecuted. Witnesses to their crimes often fail to testify or retract their testimony. See "Torture and Extrajudicial Execution in Urban Brazil" (AMR 19/05/90, June 1990), "Children Tortured and Killed in Brazil" (AMR/19/20/90, September 1990) and UA 450/90 (AMR 19/31/90, 8 November 1990).

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

- expressing concern at reported death threats to Tania Maria Salles Moreira, Public Prosecutor in Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro state;

- urging that Tania Maria Salles Moreira continue to receive special police protection until threats against her cease, and that all threats against her be fully investigated.

APPEALS TO

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

Telegrams: Ministerio da Justica, Brasilia, Brazil
Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR or 612313 MNJU BR
Faxes: + 55 61 224 4357

Exmo. Sr. Governador (State Governor of Rio de Janeiro)
 Estado do Rio de Janeiro
 Sr Wellington Moreira Franco
 Palácio Guanabara
 Rua Pinheiro Machado s/n
 22.231 Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil (after 15 March, Leonel Brizola)

Telegrams: Governador Estado Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Exmo. Sr. Secretario de Segurança (Secretary of Public Security)
 Pública
 Sr Heraldo Gomes
 Rua de Relação, N° 42, 12° Andar
 Centro
 20.031, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

Telegrams: Secretario Seguranca Publica, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

COPIES TO:

Centro de Articulação de (Centre for Ethnic Minorities)
 Populações Marginalizados (Minorities)
 Rua da Lapa N° 200 Sala 809
 20.021, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 CEP 20021

Jornal do Brasil (Newspaper)
 Avenida Brasil 500
 20.940 Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 March 1991.

