

**BRAZIL**      **Roberto Monte, lawyer and human rights defender**  
**João Marques, human rights defender**

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Amnesty International fears for the safety of human rights defenders Roberto Monte and João Marques, witnesses in the official investigations into the murder of human rights lawyer Francisco Gilson Nogueira in 1996, after both received death threats following the killing, on 3 March 1999, of another witness, Antônio Lopes.

Painter and decorator Antônio Lopes, a transvestite known as "Carla", had been gathering information against politicians, businessmen and police which suggested their connection to the murder of Francisco Gilson Nogueira. This evidence led to the case being reopened and a civil policeman being charged. Antônio Lopes's killing is now being investigated by federal police.

Roberto Monte and João Marques both work for the *Centro de Direitos Humanos e Memória Popular* (CDHMP), Centre for Human Rights and Collective Memory in Rio Grande do Norte state.

A high-ranking official in the state public security secretariat accused of making threats against Roberto Monte has resigned.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Francisco Gilson Nogueira and the CDHMP were working with a special commission, set up by the attorney general to look into the activities of a death squad known as *Meninos de Ouro*, Golden Boys, when he was killed (see UA 242/96, AMR 19/32/96, 21 October 1996). The death squad includes police officers and allegedly enjoys the protection of the Rio Grande do Norte state authorities. It is believed to be responsible for numerous killings and torture, mainly in the poor neighbourhoods of Natal, the capital of Rio Grande do Norte.

Human rights defenders in Brazil are vulnerable to death threats, intimidation, and attacks by police, death squads and hired gunmen which operate with official acquiescence. Staff at the CDHMP investigating the murder of Francisco Gilson Nogueira and the activities of the *Meninos de Ouro* have been intimidated and harassed and have, along with several state officials, been put on a death list. Luis Gonzaga Dantas, a member of the CDHMP, moved away in 1997 in order to guarantee his and his family's safety.

The Human Rights Commission of the Brazilian federal Chamber of Deputies is currently monitoring death squad activity in at least nine of Brazil's 26 states.

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

- expressing concern that Roberto Monte and João Marques have been threatened with death in connection with their human rights work and that these threats are alleged to have come from people holding public office;
- calling for them to be given any protection they may require;
- asking the authorities to carry out a full and impartial investigation into the threats and to bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern at the killing of Antônio Lopes ("Carla"), allegedly by a death squad believed to have links to the state authorities;

- calling for all those implicated in death squad activity to be thoroughly investigated and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to introduce measures to end death squad activity.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro de Justiça do Brasil  
Dr. Renan Calheiros, Ministério da Justiça  
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco 23  
70064-900 - Brasília - DF, Brazil

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

**Faxes: + 55 61 226 7980 / 322 6817**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

Governor - Rio Grande do Norte

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte  
Dr. Garibaldi Alves Filho  
Governadoria do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte  
Centro Administrativo - Lagoa Nova  
59064-901, Natal, RN, Brazil  
Telegrams: Governo

**Faxes: + 55 84 204 7090**

**Salutation: Your Excellency/ Vossa Excelência**

Public Security Secretary - Rio Grande do Norte

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública do Rio Grande do Norte  
General José Carlos Leite Filho  
Secretaria de Segurança Pública do Rio Grande do Norte  
Praça Augusto Severo, 261 - Ribeira  
59012-380, Natal, RN, Brazil

**Faxes: + 55 84 211 4866 / 221 2779**

**Salutation: Exmo. Sr. / Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:**

Centro de Direitos Humanos e Memória Popular (CDHMP)  
Rua Vigário Bartolomeu, 635  
Ed. 21 de Março - SI 607  
59023-900, Natal, RN, 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 4 May 1999.