

UA 157/00

Fear for

BRAZIL Eduardo Bernardes da Silva, Amnesty International staff
Amnesty International members in São Paulo and Porto Alegre
Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais - São Paulo - human rights organization
Gay rights activists in São Paulo
Associations of *nordestinos* (people from the northeast of Brazil)

A neofascist group, who threatened several times to kill Amnesty International staff member Eduardo Bernardes da Silva, have traced him to the location where he was moved for his safety. Amnesty International is concerned that the group appear to have informants within the police force, and believes that Eduardo and Amnesty International members in Brazil are in danger.

The group, which calls itself the *Frente Anti-Caus* (FAC), Anti-Chaos Front, planted a bomb in Amnesty International's São Paulo office in October 1999. With it was a letter featuring a crude swastika, attacking Amnesty International for its work in defence of gays and blacks. Eduardo Bernardes da Silva, who worked in the São Paulo office, began receiving telephone threats from the group, and once a group of men in a car tried to force his motorcycle off the road as he was on his way home.

Amnesty International temporarily closed the São Paulo office to review its security arrangements, and moved Eduardo to another state. The FAC delivered a letter claiming that they knew Eduardo's whereabouts, and threatening to kill him, to the Porto Alegre office on 5 June.

In the past few months, the FAC has sent letters threatening Amnesty International, human rights activists in general and gay men and lesbians to the human rights organization *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* (No More Torture Group), and to a major national newspaper, the *Folha de São Paulo*. The letters also threaten *nordestinos*, people from the impoverished and drought-stricken northeast of the country, who move to shanty towns near major cities in search of work and face widespread prejudice.

Amnesty International has reported all incidents to the São Paulo police, but although a special police squad has been set up to investigate neofascist activity in São Paulo, investigations into the group threatening Eduardo have made little or no progress. The latest threatening letter implies that the group has access to the police: "You need to tell the São Paulo police to keep their mouths shut. They're better than a newspaper." ["*Precisam falar para a polícia de São Paulo ficarem de boca fechada. Eles são melhores do que jornal.*"] Porto Alegre police have opened their own inquiry into the threats.

The latest letter repeats a threat to attack a planned gay march in São Paulo. Some gay groups and *nordestino* associations have apparently received threats, but it is not known whether the same group is involved.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Neofascist activity is a relatively new phenomenon in Brazil, which has a large racial mix. The country was shocked when skinheads beat a gay man to death on 6 February 2000. Edson Neris da Silva was killed by 18 men from a group called the *Carecas do ABC* (ABC Skinheads) after he left a bar with his boyfriend. Unusually, this skinhead group allowed Afro-Brazilians and *nordestinos* into their ranks. All 18 were arrested and charged with **murder**. Two time-bombs later

exploded in São Paulo trains. Police received a phone-call claiming that the bombs were in reprisal for the arrests.

In 1999, police also arrested two men accused of running a neofascist web-site which promoted a campaign against gays, blacks and jews.

São Paulo police have since set up a special squad to investigate neofascist activity in the state.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Eduardo Bernardes da Silva, after a neo-fascist group calling itself the *Frente Anti-Caus* repeated threats to kill him;
- expressing concern for the safety of gay activists planning a march in São Paulo, who have been specifically threatened in letters delivered to Amnesty International;
- noting that letters repeating the threats against Eduardo Bernardes da Silva, and also making general threats against human rights activists, gays, blacks, *nordestinos* and Jews, have been sent to *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais - São Paulo* and the *Folha de São Paulo*;
- noting that in eight months the São Police investigation into the threats appears to have made no progress;
- expressing concern that the latest threatening letter insinuates that the FAC has contact with the São Paulo police;
- calling for the São Paulo police to make renewed efforts to investigate and apprehend those responsible for the threats;
- noting that Eduardo Bernardes da Silva is now being threatened in Rio Grande do Sul, and calling on the authorities from both states to cooperate in investigations.

In appeals to the Minister of Justice only:

- calling for the federal government to develop a cross-state strategy to investigate and quell neofascist activity in Brazil.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça do Brasil

Dr. José Gregori

Ministério da Justiça

Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco 23

70064-900 - Brasília - DF - Brazil

Salutation: Vossa Excelência/ Your Excellency

Telegrams: Ministro Justiça, Brasília, Brazil

Fax: + 55 61 224 2448/322 6817

Public Security Secretary - São Paulo

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública do Estado de São Paulo

Dr Marco Vinicio Petrelluzzi

Secretaria de Segurança Pública

Av. Higienópolis 758, Higienópolis

01238-000 - São Paulo - SP - Brazil

Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Secretário/Dear Sir

Telegrams: Secretário Segurança Pública, SP, Brazil

Fax: + 55 11 3823 5708

COPIES TO:**Secretary of Justice and Public Security, Rio Grande do Sul**

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Justiça e Segurança Pública do
Estado de Rio Grande do Sul

Dr. José Paulo Bisol

Secretaria de Segurança Pública

Rua 7 de Setembro, 666, 1º andar

90010-190 - Porto Alegre - RS - Brazil

Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Secretário/Dear Sir

Telegrams: Secretário Segurança Pública, RS, Brazil

Fax: + 55 51 211 5624

Amnesty International - Porto Alegre

Rua Jacinto Gomes No. 573

Santana

90010-321 - Porto Alegre - RS - 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 25 July 2000.