

PUBLIC

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UA 267/08      Fear for safety

BRAZIL      Joinville Frota (m), trade unionist  
His family

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Trade unionist Joinville Frota escaped an attempt on his life on 23 August, and has gone into hiding with his family. He is the head of the trade union representing the transport workers of Macapá, the capital of the far northern state of Amapá, and will be running for election as mayor in October.

Joinville Frota is the president of the *Sindicato dos Condutores de Veículos e Trabalhadores em Empresas Transportes Rodoviários de Passageiros do Amapá*, the Amapá Transport Workers' Union. On 23 August, at around 2.45am, a petrol bomb was thrown at Frota's house, which is made of wood. Frota heard the explosion, and got up to find one wall of his house on fire. With the help of his wife, daughters and neighbours, he managed to put the fire out. The arson attack took place during a dispute between the union and two local bus companies over pay and health benefits.

After Frota protested to the local authorities, two judges from the *Tribunal Regional Eleitoral*, Regional Electoral Tribunal, went to the house and requested that the federal police conduct a forensic examination. No arrests have been made following the examination.

Frota has repeatedly requested federal police protection, without success.

The attack on Frota's house is the latest in a series of attacks against the Transport Workers' Union. In 2003, its headquarters were ransacked. The following year one of its directors, Frota's wife, had a gun held to her head. In April 2008 there was an arson attack against the union headquarters. In May, Frota received death threats while leading a strike against a bus company. No one has been arrested in connection with any of the threats or attacks.

Joinville Frota has worked as a bus conductor, driver and safety inspector in Macapá. In 2001, he was fired after he accused the bus company of violating agreements made with workers in the aftermath of a strike. He was reinstated after protests by fellow workers. In 2002 he became a union leader and since then has been at the forefront of a campaign to improve workers' pay and benefits, and reduce bus fares.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Trade union activists continue to suffer threats and violence across Brazil, especially in the north of the country. In the neighbouring state of Pará, dozens of union activists are on a death list, drawn up by gunmen at the request of landowners. Local police are often unwilling to investigate allegations of threats and violence being used against union activists. The police have been reluctant to cooperate with the national human rights defenders programmes, even when they have received direct requests to provide protection for those under threat.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Portuguese or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety Joinville Frota and his family;
- urging the authorities to provide immediate, effective protection for Joinville Frota and his family, in accordance with their wishes;
- calling on them to undertake a full and public investigation into both the 23 August arson attack and the pattern of attacks against the Transport Workers' Union, and bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities of their responsibilities to guarantee the safety of all human rights defenders and to investigate threats against them.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça do Brasil

Tarso Fernando Herz Genro

Ministério da Justiça

Esplanada dos Ministérios,

Bloco "T 4 andar

70.712-902 - Brasília/DF, Brazil

**Fax: +55 61 3322 6817**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

Governor of Amapá state

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Amapá

Antônio Waldez Góes da Silva

Palácio do Setentrião

Rua General Rondon, 259, Centro

CEP 68906-130 – Macapá (AP), Brazil

**Fax: +55 96 3212 1104**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country.

President of the Regional Electoral Tribunal of Amapá

Exmo. Sr. Presidente Carmo Antônio de Souza

Av. Mendonça Junior 1502, Centro

CEP 68900-020 – Macapá (AP), Brazil

**Fax: +55 96 3214 1701**

**+55 96 3223 5471**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 October 2008.