

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern

15 June 1992

BRAZIL:

Severo DA SILVA (peasant)

Amnesty International is concerned about the circumstances surrounding the killing on around 19 May 1992 of Severo da Silva, a peasant married with six children, in the municipality of Santa Luzia, Maranhão state, Brazil.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Severo da Silva worked in the fazenda Campo Limpo (Campo Lindo estate). Eight days before his death the owner of the fazenda reportedly had an argument with him. The landowner, allegedly surrounded by armed men, accused Severo da Silva of plotting a land invasion of his fazenda.

Severo da Silva was allegedly last seen on 18 May in the landowner's car. On 19 May the police found the body of Severo da Silva with several bullet wounds on the side of the road. Witnesses who claim to have seen him in the car are reportedly afraid to testify. The police reportedly buried him the same day without advising his family and no police inquiry has been apparently opened to investigate the cause of his death. Amnesty International is concerned at the circumstances surrounding Severo da Silva's death suggesting possible connivance from the part the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peasants, members of rural trade unions and their advisers have been the targets of death threats, assaults, abductions and killings in the context of land disputes in rural Brazil. While Amnesty International takes no position on competing claims in land disputes, it is concerned that gunmen allegedly acting on behalf of landowners have carried out intimidation and killings of peasants, their leaders and advisers with a high degree of impunity.

Amnesty International considers that the persistent failure to prosecute the perpetrators of such abuses may be evidence of acquiescence in the crimes by the state authorities concerned, and may encourage them to be repeated.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/telephone calls/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that no investigation has been opened into the killing of Severo da Silva;

- urging that an immediate and effective inquiry be carried out into his death and that those found responsible be brought to justice, ensuring that killings of this kind do not continue to be carried out with impunity;

- requesting to be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

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APPEALS TO

1. Minister of Justice:

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça
Sr. Célio Borja
Ministério da Justiça
Esplanada dos Ministérios
Bloco 23
70.064 Brasília, DF
Brazil

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência /
Your Excellency**

Telegrams: Ministro Justiça, Brasília, Brazil
Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR, 612313 MNJU BR
Faxes: + 55 61 2244357

2. State Governor:

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Maranhão
Sr. Edison Lobão
Palácio dos Leões
Av. Pedro II
65.000 São Luis - MA
Brazil

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência /
Your Excellency**

Telegrams: Governador Maranhao, Sao Luis, Maranhao, Brazil

3. State Secretary of Public Security:

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública
Estado de Maranhão
Sr. Jorge Rachid Mubarak
Rua da Palma, N° 247 , Centro
65.000 - São Luis - MA, Brazil

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

Telegrams: Secreatio de Seguranca Publica, Sao Luis, Maranhao, Brazil
Telephone: + 55 98 232 1264/222 5737
Telexes: 982293

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

National Pastoral Land Commission:

Comissão Pastoral da Terra Nacional
Rua 20, 251 Central
Caixa Postal 749
74.000 Goiania
Goias, Brazil

Deputy Attorney General:

Subprocurador Geral da República
Dr Alvaro Augusto Ribeiro da Costa

Procuraduria Geral da República
Av. L2 Sul,
SGAS 603 Lote 23 S. 328
70.200 Brasília - DF
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 27 July 1992.