

8 September 1995

Further information on UA 198/95 (AMR 19/16/95 [note correct index number], 11 August 1995) - Possible Extrajudicial Executions / Fear for Safety / Medical concern

BRAZIL Squatter peasants in Corumbiara, Rondônia State

Killed: Vanessa dos Santos Silva (7-year-old girl)  
Nelsi Ferreira, 25  
Enio Rocha Borges  
José Marcondes da Silva  
Ercílio Oliveira de Campo, 41  
Odilson Feliciano  
Ari Pinheiro Santos  
Sergio Rodriguez Gomes  
two unidentified men

Missing: Maria Dos Santos (f)  
Maria Nunes de Mello (f)  
Denire Luiza da Luz (f)  
Alcindo Correio da Silva  
Antonio Gomes de Oliveira  
Ario Ribeiro da Silva  
Carlos Antonio Rodrigues  
Darly Martins Pereira  
Jessi Miguel  
José Antonio Primo  
Valdeir Primo

---

Several investigations into police action to evict 600 squatter peasants families from the Santa Elina estate in Corumbiara, Rondônia, on 9 August 1995, have confirmed that police were responsible for gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions. Eleven squatter peasants remain unaccounted for. Amnesty International's fear for their safety has been heightened by the discovery in the Tanaru River on 23 August of the body of Sergio Gomes two weeks after he was taken away by military police.

The report of the Federal Chamber of Deputies' Special Representative Commission of its on-site investigation stated: "It is unquestionable that a massacre occurred at the Santa Elina estate". The Commission reserved particular criticism for the judge who issued the expulsion order even though negotiations to resolve the land conflict were continuing, and for not instructing police to exercise restraint. The official number of dead remains 12 (10 peasants and two military police officers). Autopsy reports reveal that six of the 10 peasants were shot in the back, some were shot in the head, and some at short distance.

According to several accounts, at 4am on 9 August, when most of the peasants were asleep, police fired teargas into the encampment and set fire to huts, causing panic. It does seem that shots fired at the police and two officers were killed. Police reportedly used women as "human shields", and not only fired into the crowd of fleeing peasants, but, having regained control, carried out extrajudicial executions.

Seven year-old Vanessa dos Santos was shot as she ran with her mother, in whose arms she later died. Witness testimony relates how José Marcondes and Ercílio Campos were shot dead after having given themselves up and lain on the ground.

Odilson Feliciano and Odilson Feliciano were also reportedly fatally shot when defenceless.

Acts of extreme barbarity were allegedly carried out by some of the police.

As peasants were being forced to lift bodies on to a truck, police allegedly forced three peasants to put bits of the brain of one dead man in their mouths, after one of them had shown signs of nausea. The peasant was allegedly told by a policeman "You feel sick. Pick up that brain and put it in your mouth, boy. Then you'll lose your fear of a dead man".

Over 170 people were wounded with beatings and/or gunshots. A number are still in hospital. Several people, including at least eight adolescents, were beaten with guns, while lying face down. Moacir Carmago alleged that, after having helped carry bodies to a truck, he was shot, beaten and nearly set on fire.

Genis Rodrigues Souza (15), Adilson Rocha Silva, Jeremias Goncalves (18), Mesias Ramos da Cruz and Wanderlei Antonio Coelho were shot and then beaten on the site of their injuries. Police reportedly took disabled José Carlos Moreira's crutches away, forced him to drag himself along the ground and beat him with a piece of wood with a nail in it. Three young women, Zelina (26), Idalina Lucia da Silva Medeiros (19) and Paula Alves (15) had clear marks of beating. After visiting the site of the massacre and visiting the wounded the Bishop of Guajara Mirim, Dom Geraldo Verdier, "I have never seen anything like what I found there, nor so many people tortured".

The Commander of Military Police for Rondônia state who defended the police action has been dismissed. Investigations have been opened by the Rondônia state civil and military police. However by 4 September, only 9 of the 187 military police involved had been questioned. The Minister of Justice has ordered a parallel investigation by the federal police. AI has asked for clarification of the status of this investigation.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Portuguese, Spanish, English or in your own language:**

- expressing extreme concern at reports of extrajudicial executions, beatings and acts of barbarity carried out by Rondônia state military police while expelling peasant families from the Santa Elina estate;
- urging re-doubled efforts to locate those peasants who are still missing and ensure their safety;
- asking for a progress report of state-level investigations;
- asking that in view of the extreme gravity of human rights abuses in question, the federal authorities and federal police take over responsibility for the investigation with a view to criminal prosecution, by a non-military court, of those found responsible for human rights violations.

**Please continue appeals to authorities listed in original action (new fax numbers for Ministry of Justice: +55 61 224 2448), and in addition please arrange appeals to:**

Federal Police Chief in Rondonia  
 Sr. Superintendente da Polícia Federal  
 Departamento da Polícia Federal  
 Avenida 15 de Novembro, no 3585  
 78.950 Vilhena, RO, Brazil

**Telexes: 696891**

**Telegrams: Policia Federal, Porto Velho, RO, Brazil**

**Salutation: Sr Superintendente / Dear Superintendant**

Federal Citizens Rights Procurator

Procurador Regional do Estado de Rondônia

Osnir Belice

Rua Almirante Barroso, 1403

78.915-020 Porto Velho-RO, Brazil

**Faxes: + 55 69 224-3897**

**Telegrams: Procuraduria Federal, Porto Velho, RO, Brazil**

**Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Procurator**

Military Police Commander, Rondonia

Sr Commandante da Polícia Militar

Batalhão da Policia Militar, Quartel Geral

Avenida Angelo Cerri c/ Avendia Venezuela

78.9000 Porto Velho, RO, Brasil

**Telexes: 692284**

**Telegrams: Commandante Policia Militar, Porto Velho, RO, Brazil**

**Salutation: Sr. Commandante / Dear Commander**

**COPIES TO addresses as in original action 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 31 October 1995.