

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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PLEASE ORGANISE UP TO 10 APPEALS PER SECTION.

UA 251/91

Death Threats

22 July 1991

BRAZIL:

Antonio RODRIGUES DE AMORIM

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim, former parliamentary candidate of the Partido dos Trabalhadores, the Workers' Party, and president of the Rural Workers Union of Tauá, Ceará, Brazil, who has been the subject of death threats and an attempt on his life.

On 2 July 1991, Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim was threatened, first verbally, and subsequently with a knife, by a person whose family has been involved in a land dispute with the family of Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim and other peasant families. The attacker, who had allegedly made several previous death threats against Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim, was briefly detained by the police and later released without charge.

In 1977, peasants from the Fazenda Abóbora, the Abóbora estate, including the family of Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim, took court action against their landowner to have their rent payments reduced according to the law. Since then, the landowners have allegedly been trying to evict the peasants from the land. In 1987, the remaining families who had not been evicted won a court action that protected them from eviction and reduced their rent payment. Since then, Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim reportedly began to receive death threats.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Land disputes between peasant smallholders and landowners and conflicts over rural workers' conditions are an endemic source of violence in Brazil. According to figures from the Comissão Pastoral da Terra, Pastoral Land Commission, between 1985 and 1990 640 people died in Brazil in land and work-related conflicts. According to the same source, in 1990, there were, in the state of Ceará, 25 attempted murders and 46 reported death threats for the same type of conflicts.

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 their advisers with the acquiescence or complicity of the authorities. The Brazilian authorities on all levels have persistently failed to take effective action to prevent or investigate the killings or to bring those responsible to justice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported death threats to Antonio Rodrigues de Amorim and his family and urging that they receive adequate protection to prevent them being killed.

APPEALS TO:

(please organise up to 10 appeals per section)

State Governor: Ceará

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Ceará
Dr. Ciro Ferreira Gomes
Centro Administrativo
Gov. Virgilio Távora
Cambéba
60.820 Fortaleza, Ceará
Brazil

**Telegrams: Governador Estado do Ceara, Fortaleza
Ceara, Brazil**

Faxes: +55 85 229 3657

Secretary of Public Security:

Sr Secretário de Segurança Pública do Estado do Ceará
Sr. Francisco Crisóstomo
Praça Voluntarios s/n
Fortaleza, Ceará
Brazil

**Telegrams: Secretario de Seguranca Publica, Fortaleza
Ceara, Brazil**

COPIES TO:

Comissão Pastoral da Terra
Rua Felix Barroso 405 (Bairro de Fátima)
Cx Postal 171
60.001-Fortaleza
Ceára, Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with your the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 September 1991.