

**EXTERNAL**

**AI Index: AMR 19/27/97**

**UA 340/97**

**Death Threats / Fear for safety**

**30 October 1997**

**BRAZIL Miriam Prochnow (f), environmental activist**

**Wigold Schaeffer (m), environmental activist**

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Two environmental activists campaigning to save the Mata Atlantica Rainforests in the state of Santa Catarina in the south of Brazil have been threatened with death because of their work. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the couple and their two young children.

The anonymous threats against Miriam Prochnow and Wigold Schaeffer were left on their telephone answering machine last week. One caller said, "Tell Miriam and Wigold to keep out of the logging in Santa Terezinha [a small town nearby], because we are not like Pamplona [a local meat company], we're not going to just make threats and then do nothing". Another caller simply repeated over and over "You're going to die, you're going to die". The verbal threats have now ceased but they continue to receive silent, anonymous phone calls.

Amnesty International is concerned at the failure of the state authorities to open an immediate investigation into the threats. Miriam Prochnow and Wigold Schaeffer have been receiving threats since last year, but these most recent ones have caused them greatest fear for their physical safety and that of their two young children.

The couple live in a very small town in an isolated region, the Vale do Itajai. On 23 October, deputies from the state legislative assembly requested police protection for them, but there has been no response from the state or federal police. On 24 October, Wigold Schaeffer and Miriam Prochnow formally reported the death threats and requested a police investigation at the nearest police station in Rio do Sul. However, the police chief had so far taken no action either to provide them with protection or to investigate the death threats. The couple also asked a local state prosecutor to obtain telephone records in order to help them trace the calls immediately. The state prosecutor refused and told them to have their lawyer petition for the records from the local judge. The petition was entered on 24 October and there has so far been no response.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Wigold Schaeffer and Miriam Prochnow have a long record of environmental activism in Brazil. They are directors of the well-respected National Environmental Foundation, APREMAVI, based in Rio do Sul. They have campaigned, with some success, to keep loggers, tobacco growers, real estate developers and agribusiness from destroying what remains of the Mata Atlantica rainforest in Santa Catarina. They have opposed large-scale pig production and fish farming in the region as the lagoons allegedly became breeding grounds for mosquitoes, causing epidemics among the local population, especially children. Federal legislation protects the Mata Atlantica, and the couple has campaigned to prevent this legislation being overturned by the political allies of the above-mentioned economic groups. However, the state governor recently introduced a state law, in contradiction to the federal law, which permits logging and other environmentally harmful activities in the area.

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

- calling on the state authorities of Santa Catarina to ensure that the death threats against Miriam Prochnow and Wigold Schaeffer and their family are promptly, effectively and impartially investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- asking the state authorities of Santa Catarina to guarantee that all necessary measures, including police protection if necessary, are taken to provide protection to Miriam Prochnow and Wigold Schaeffer and their family.

**APPEALS TO:**

Exmo. Sr. Paulo Afonso E. Vieira  
 Governador do Estado de Santa Catarina (State Governor)  
 Palácio Santa Catarina  
 Rua José da Costa Moelmann 193  
 Praça Tancredo Neves  
 88020-170 Florianópolis SC, Brazil

**Telegrams: Governador Estado, Santa Catarina, Florianopolis, Brazil**

**Faxes: + 55-48-221-3137**

**Salutation: Your Excellency/Vossa Excelência**

Exma. Sra. Secretário de Segurança Pública do Estado de Santa Catarina  
 (State Secretary of Public Security)

Lúcia Maria Stefanovich  
 Rua Esteves Junior, N°80  
 88015-530 Florianópolis SC, Brazil

**Faxes: + 55 48 222 3462**

**Telegrams: Secretario Seguranca Publica Santa Catarina, Florianopolis, Brazil**

**Salutation: Dear Madam/Sra. Secretário**

**COPIES TO:**

Exmo. Francisco de Assis Kuster  
 Presidente, Assembléia Legislativa de Santa Catarina  
 (President of the State Assembly of Santa Catarina)  
 Palácio Barriga Verde  
 Praça Tancredo Neves  
 88020-900 Florianópolis SC, Brazil

**Faxes: +55-48-221-2600 (if voice ask for fax)**

Exmo. Eduardo Martins  
 Presidente, IBAMA (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente)  
 (President of the Brazilian Institute for the Environment)  
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 70800-200 Brasília - DF, Brazil

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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 15 December 1997.