

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Threats

21 October 1991

BRAZIL

Father Ladislau DA SILVA

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Father Ladislau Da Silva, parish priest of Esperantina, Piauí, North East Brazil, who, in recent months, has been subjected to repeated death threats and other forms of intimidation.

Death threats against Father Ladislau da Silva reportedly started after he publicly denounced what he regarded as the corruption of local authorities and their unusually high salaries, compared to the extremely low wages of local urban and rural workers. Father Ladislau has also been outspoken in the defence of peasants' rights. On 27 September, while Father Ladislau was away, his parish house was broken into by unidentified gunmen.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Death threats are a common feature of rural violence in Brazil. They are part of a "culture of terror" aimed at intimidating people who are fighting for their rights to make them abandon their struggle. As another priest, also subjected to death threats in the North Eastern state of Alagoas, told an Amnesty International delegate: "***[Death] threats are no joke. They are aimed at creating a "suspense of death" ["um suspenso da morte"]. It is a ritual that has to be fulfilled.***" According to the Comissão Pastoral da Terra, Pastoral Land Commission, CPT, in February 1991 108 persons had been subjected to death threats in different areas of rural Brazil. Piauí is one of the poorest states of Brazil and the region around Esperantina is particularly deprived.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported death threats to Father Ladislau da Silva;
- urging that the death threats against Father Ladislau da Silva be thoroughly investigated and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- requesting that steps be taken to ensure that Father Ladislau da Silva is able to carry out his work without fear for his physical safety.

page 2 of UA 347/91

APPEALS TO:

Exmo.Sr Ministro da Justiça,

Vossa Excelência

Sr Jarbas Passarinho,
Ministério da Justiça,

Esplanada dos Ministerios
Bloco 23,
70.064 Brasilia DF, Brazil (Minister of Justice)

Telegrams: Ministro da Justiça, Brasilia, Brazil
Telexes 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR or 612313 MNJU BR
Faxes: + 55 61 321 5145
+ 55 61 224 4357

Exmo. Sr Governador do **Vossa Excelência**

Estado de Piauí
Sr. Antonio Freitas Neto
Palacio do Karnak
Av Antonio Freire 1450
64.000 Teresina
Piauí, Brazil (State Governor, Piauí)

Telegrams: Governador do Piaui, Teresina, Piaui, Brazil.

Exmo. Sr Secretario de Segurança **Sr Secretario**
Pública do Estado de Piauí
Sr Ismar Aguiar Marques,
Praça Conselheiro Saraiva 269
64.000 Teresina
Piauí, Brazil (Secretary of Public Security)

Telegrams: Secretario Seguaranca Publica de Piaui, Teresina, Piaui, Brazil

COPIES TO:

Padre Ladislau da Silva
Casa Parroquial,
Praça Leonidas Melo 214,
64180 Esperantina
Piauí, Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat
or your section office if sending appeals after 3 December 1991.