

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Threats

21 October 1991

BRAZIL

Father Manoel Aparecido MONTEIRO
Maria da Conceição NEVES BARBOSA

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Father Manoel Aparecido Monteiro, parish priest of Monte Santo, Bahia state, and Maria da Conceição Barbosa, lawyer of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra, Pastoral Land Commission, CPT, in nearby Bonfim, Bahia, who are being subjected to anonymous death threats.

Death threats against Father Manoel Aparecido Monteiro and Maria da Conceição Neves Barbosa allegedly started after their intervention, in August 1991, on behalf of 170 peasant families who were involved in a land conflict with two neighbouring landowners. The conflict has involved violence from both sides. On 20 August, in an armed confrontation, two landowners' employees were killed. Two peasants have been detained and are awaiting trial accused of the killings. However, there is no indication that Father Manoel Aparecido Monteiro or Maria da Conceição Neves Barbosa have either instigated or supported violence. An anonymous letter, stained with blood, was reportedly left under Father Manoel Monteiro's doorstep threatening not only him, but also Maria da Conceição Neves Barbosa and five other lay parish workers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Land disputes between peasant smallholders and landowners are an endemic source of violence in Brazil. Over 1000 peasants and their supporters are reported to have been killed since 1980, the vast majority of them by hired gunmen, known as pistoleiros, employed by landowners or aspiring landowners (See: Amnesty International: "Brazil: Authorized Violence in Rural Areas" AI Index AMR/19/16/88, September 1988). 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 apparent impunity. Evidence suggests that these crimes are often carried out with the acquiescence or complicity of the authorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported death threats to Father Manoel Aparecido Monteiro and Maria da Conceição Neves Barbosa;
- urging that the death threats be thoroughly investigated and that those found

responsible be brought to justice;

- requesting that steps be taken to ensure that Father Manoel Aparecido Monteiro and Maria da Conceição Neves Barbosa are able to carry out their work without fear for their physical safety.

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APPEALS TO:

1) (Minister of Justice)

Vossa Excelência

Exmo Sr Ministro da Justiça,
Sr Jarbas Passarinho,
Ministério da Justiça,
Esplanada dos Ministerios
Bloco 23, 70.064 Brasilia DF,
Brazil

Telegrams: Ministro da Justiça, Brasilia, Brazil

Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR or 612313 MNJU BR

Faxes: + 55 51 321 51 45

2) (State Governor, Bahia)

Vossa Excelência

Exmo Sr Governador do
Estado da Bahia,
Sr Antonio Carlos Magalhaes,
Palacio de Ondina,
Av. Luiz Vianna Filho,
Centro Administrativo,
40.000 Salvador, Bahia,
Brazil

Telegrams: Governador do Bahia, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

3) (State Secretary of Public Security)

Sr Secretario

Exmo Sr Secretario de
Segurança Pública,
Estado da Bahia,
Sr Sergio Alexandre Meneses Habib,
Praça da Piedade s/n,
40.000 Salvador, Bahia,
Brazil

Telegrams: Secretario Segurança Pública de Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

COPIES TO:

Padre Manoel Aparecido Monteiro,
Parroquia Sagrado Coração de Jesus,
Praça Mons. Berenguer,
48.800 Monte Santo, Bahia,
Brazil

Comissão Pastoral da Terra,
Rua 20, 251, Central,

(Pastoral Land Commission)

Caixa Postal 749,
74.000 Goiania, Goias,
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 2 December 1991.