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BRAZIL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR FEDERAL INVESTIGATION INTO
KILLING OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

Amnesty International is calling for the federal police to investigate yesterday's killing of Gilson Nogueira, a lawyer investigating cases of death squad crimes in Rio Grande do Norte state.

The 34-year-old lawyer was shot dead on his doorstep in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, by six men. He was killed by 13 shots, most of them to the head.

"The Brazilian human rights movement has lost a courageous and committed activist," Amnesty International said today. "The federal government now has the responsibility to ensure that Gilson Nogueira's death does not result in the impunity that he fought against."

Gilson Nogueira and his colleagues at the *Centro de Direitos Humanos e Memória Popular* (CDHMP), Centre for Human Rights and Collective Memory, had received repeated death threats in connection with their work in investigating and exposing the activities of a death squad which appears to enjoy the protection of the Rio Grande do Norte authorities. The death squad, known as the *Meninos de Ouro*, Golden Boys, is responsible for numerous killings and other crimes in the poor neighbourhoods of Natal.

Gilson Nogueira was working with a special commission set up in May 1995 by the Rio Grande do Norte attorney general to investigate the death squad and its connection to the authorities. Gilson Nogueira's work also included legal representation for the families of death squad victims, including those of the "Mãe Luíza massacre" of 5 March 1995, in which two people were killed, one a pregnant woman.

Amnesty International has taken up many cases in Brazil of death threats, attempted killings and killings of people working in defence of the victims of human rights such as lawyers, church workers, trade unionists and members of human rights groups. In May 1996, an international conference in Bogotá, Colombia, on the protection of human rights defenders in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by Amnesty International, called upon state and intergovernmental bodies to guarantee the free exercise of the rights to promote and defend human rights.

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