

URGENT ACTION

NGO STAFF THREATENED WITH DEATH IN BRAZIL

Lawyer Diogo Cabral and priest Father Inaldo Serejo, who work for the Brazilian NGO Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Pastoral Land Commission, CPT) were threatened with death on 25 July, in the town of Cantanhede, northern Brazil.

Diogo Cabral and the head of CPT in Maranhão state, **Father Inaldo Serejo**, were threatened on the afternoon of 25 July whilst attending a hearing related to a land dispute between local farmers and the Afro-descendant community, Salgado. The dispute involves an area of land in the municipality of Pirapemas, 133 km from São Luís, the capital of Maranhão state. In spite of the fact that the community's right to remain on the land was legally recognized in October 2010, farmers succeeded in filing an eviction order which was only suspended after the intervention of Diogo Cabral and Father Inaldo Serejo.

Diogo Cabral said a local farmer confronted the pair as they arrived at the local court, saying that outsiders were bringing problems for local people, and that because their support for the quilombo (Afro-descendent) community "we have to kill people once in a while, just like they did with Sister Dorothy". [*"a gente tem que passar o fogo de vez em quando, que nem fizeram com a irmã Dorothy!"*]

The threat against Lawyer Diogo Cabral and Father Inaldo Serejo follows a series of threats against Afro-descendent communities in the region and the CPT workers who are representing them. In May 2010, the CPT received a phone call saying that the quilombola communities' food would be poisoned. On 13 June 2011 the CPT's headquarters in São Luís was broken into, and documents were rifled through. Two days later, another CPT office in Pinheiro, close to São Luís, was broken into and documents and a computer were stolen. The residents of the Salgado quilombola community have complained of a sustained campaign of harassment and intimidation by local farmers, who have destroyed crops, killed livestock, fenced off water sources and threatened community leaders with death.

Please write immediately in Portuguese, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of lawyer Diogo Cabral and Father Inaldo Serejo as well as the quilombola communities they represent, who have been subjected to death threats, and calling on the authorities to provide protection according to their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to investigate all acts of violence and intimidation against these human rights defenders and Afro-descendent communities and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on them to complete the land reform process in the region in order to bring long-term security to these communities.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 SEPTEMBER 2011 TO:

Secretary of Security of Maranhão State

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Estado
Aluísio Guimarães Mendes Filho
Av. dos Franceses, s/nº Outeiro da Cruz
65.036-280 - São Luís/MA
Fax: +55 98 3214-3735 say "sinal de fax, por favour"

Salutation: Vossa Excelência/ Your Excellency

Federal Human Rights Secretary

Exma Sra. Ministra Maria do Rosário
Setor Comercial Sul - B, Quadra 9, Lote C, Edifício Parque Cidade Corporate, Torre "A", 10º andar,
Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brasil
CEP: 70308-200

And copies to:

Comissão Pastoral da Terra - Maranhão
Rua Porto Alegre, 446,
Bairro São João, caixa postal: 50 - CEP: 77.807-070 - Araguaína-to.
Fax: +55 62 4008 6405

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Quilombola communities are Afro-Brazilian settlements which were first established at the end of the 16th century in remote rural areas in Brazil by escaped and freed slaves that resisted slavery. The 1988 Brazilian Constitution (Articles. 215, 216 and ADCT 68) acknowledges the right of descendant communities to the lands historically occupied by quilombos, stating that 'Final ownership shall be recognized for the remaining members of the quilombola communities who are occupying their lands and the state shall grant them the respective land titles'. (*"Aos remanescentes das comunidades dos quilombos que estejam ocupando suas terras é reconhecida a propriedade definitiva, devendo o Estado emitir-lhes os títulos respectivos."*).

A series of federal and state laws has been issued to regulate how the quilombola lands are identified and how titles are to be given to the remaining communities, culminating in 2009 in the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform's (INCRA) Normative Regulation No.57/2009. This establishes the various administrative steps - identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation, removal of illegal occupants, titling and land registration - required for quilombola communities to attain title to their lands.

In addition to the national legislation, Brazil is also a party to the International Labour Organization's Convention 169, the American Convention on Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which reaffirm the rights of Afro-descendant groups to cultural and land rights as well as the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law.

There are over three thousand quilombola communities in Brazil, hundreds of administrative procedures have been initiated before the INCRA but to date less than 10 per cent of the communities have received their land titles. This process has generated conflict in many parts of Brazil, with local farmers using violence and intimidation against communities fighting for their land rights. In parts of Maranhão state, these conflicts date back to the 1980s but have intensified as afro-descendent communities have gained more rights under law to pursue their claims. Thirty quilombola leaders in the region have received death threats.

Name: Diogo Cabral and Father Inaldo Serejo

Gender m/f: Both male

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