

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTING TEACHERS FACE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

The Public Security Secretary and many other high-level State officials have been replaced following the teachers' protest and police repression on 29 April in Paraná State, south Brazil. The Public Defender's Office informed Amnesty International that all those detained during the protest were released but will be subject to criminal investigation.

On 8 May the former Public Security Secretary, Fernando Francischini, was replaced by a new Secretary, Wagner Mesquita de Oliveira. This change is a result of the crisis in the Paraná State Government after the episode of police repression against the teachers' protest on 29 April in the city of Curitiba, the capital of Paraná. There have been several other changes to high-level State authorities in the past days. On 7 May the general commander of the Military Police of Paraná State, César Vinícius Kogut, resigned and in a public statement justified leaving the position due to "difficulties in the relationship with the Public Security Secretary that could not be overcome". The teachers' strike and the police repression in response to their protests also resulted in the change of the Secretary of Education in the State.

On 12 May the Public Defender's Office of Paraná State informed Amnesty International that a total of 14 people had been detained following the protest of 29 April, 12 of which are adults and two of which are under 18. The Public Defender's Office also stated that all those detained have already been released but will face further criminal investigation for the alleged crimes of resistance, contempt, and disturbance of others' work and quietness (*perturbação do trabalho ou sossego alheio*). Those detained were teachers, students or civil servants of the State. The Public Defender's Office also informed that all those detained had their mobile phones apprehended, without judicial authorization and with no related facts that could justify such seizure, in what they called "a clear violation of their privacy".

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

- Urging the authorities to ensure a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into allegations of police abuse and excessive use of force towards protesters during the 29 April demonstration in Curitiba;
- Calling on them to ensure that all those injured receive proper medical care in accordance with their wishes;
- Urging them to uphold the right to peaceful assembly and not to use force against peaceful protesters.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 JUNE 2015 TO:

Governor of the State of Paraná
Beto Richa
Praça Nossa Senhora de Salette, s/n
Centro Cívico, Curitiba
CEP 80.530-909
Paraná, Brazil

Salutation: Dear Governor

Public Security Secretary
Wagner Mesquita de Oliveira
Rua Deputado Mário de Barros, 1290
Ed. Caetano Munhoz da Rocha
Centro Cívico, Curitiba
CEP 80.530-280
Paraná, Brazil
Email: gabinete@sesp.pr.gov.br
Salutation: Dear Secretary

And copies to:
President of the Union of Public Education Workers of Paraná State
Hermes Silva Leão
Sindicato dos Trabalhadores em Educação Pública do Paraná
Avenida Iguaçu, 880
Rebouças, Curitiba
CEP 80.230-020
Paraná, Brazil
Email: gabinete@app.com.br

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. This is the first update of UA : 104/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR191611/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Around 20,000 people, mostly teachers from the public education system, gathered on 29 April in front of the State Assembly in the city of Curitiba, the capital of Paraná, to protest against changes in the state's rules for social security and retirement for civil servants. Teachers had been on strike since 25 April to protest against these changes and had been gathering in front of the State Assembly since 28 April as a vote on the new state rules was expected. Around 4pm on 29 April, the military police that were present (including riot police units) received orders to disperse the protest and proceeded to severely repress participants using tear gas, rubber bullets and truncheons.

The Municipal Health Care Unit reported 213 protesters injured, some of them severely. Many had been hit by rubber bullets in the face. At least one journalist was injured after being attacked by a military police dog. In an official statement from the State's Public Security Secretary it was reported that seven protesters were detained for being "members of radical groups". On 30 April, following the violent repression of the protest, the Governor of Paraná justified the police's behaviour and did not provide any indication that an investigation into reports of police abuse was going to be carried out. As a reaction, at least two more protests have taken place to express solidarity with the teachers, denounce police abuses and demand justice: the first on 1 May, with around 10,000 participants, the next on 5 May with around 20,000 participants.

In 2014, Brazil witnessed thousands of protesters in the streets as the country prepared to host the football World Cup in June that year. The protests echoed huge demonstrations that took place the previous year, in which Brazilians expressed their discontent with increased public transportation costs, high World Cup spending and insufficient investment in public services. The protests in 2013, which began in São Paulo in May / June, reached an unprecedented scale, with hundreds of thousands of people participating in mass demonstrations in dozens of cities. The police response to the wave of protests since 2013 was, in many instances, violent and abusive. Military police units used tear gas indiscriminately against protesters – in one case even inside a hospital – fired rubber bullets at people who posed no threat and beat people with hand-held batons. Hundreds were injured, including a photographer who lost his eye after being hit by a rubber bullet. Hundreds more were indiscriminately rounded up and detained, some under laws targeting organized crime, without any indication that they were involved in criminal activity. Amnesty International documented some of the episodes of police repression to protests in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the campaign digest *They use a strategy of fear: protecting the right to protest in Brazil* (AMR 19/005/2014). After the World Cup, a document summarizing cases of excessive use of force, miss-use of less lethal weapons, arbitrary detentions, repression to journalists and lawyers, in several of the host cities was released under the name *Protests during the World Cup 2014: final overview* (AMR 19/008/201).

On 30 April 2015, Amnesty International Brazil released a public statement expressing concerns about the police repression of the teachers' protest in Curitiba and asking for a thorough and immediate investigation into the alleged abuses. The full statement can be read, in Portuguese only, here: <https://anistia.org.br/noticias/autoridades-precisam-assumir-responsabilidade-pela-violencia-contra-professores-parana/>

The Commission of the Senate for Human Rights and Participatory Legislation issued a public statement on 30 April condemning the police violence and repression to the teachers' protest in Curitiba. "These were scenes of horror that happened as a consequence of the incapacity of the Military Police Command to manage the situation as well as their higher command, the governor of the State of Paraná, Beto Richa" says part of the statement. ("Foram cenas de horror que aconteceram em virtude da incapacidade de gerenciamento da situação por parte do comando da Polícia Militar local, e de seu comandante maior, o governador do estado do Paraná, Beto Richa"). The Commission called a public hearing about the case for May 6 to take place in the Senate in Brasília.

Further information on UA: 104/15 Index: AMR 19/1638/2015 Issue Date: 12 May 2015