

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible Extrajudicial Execution

6 February 1991

BRAZIL : **Expedito RIBEIRO DE SOUZA, trade union leader**

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On 2 February 1991 Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the Rural Workers Union of Rio Maria, Pará state, was shot dead at about 9pm by an unknown assailant 200 metres from his home.

Expedito Ribeiro de Souza had been receiving death threats for more than a year (see UA 167/90, AMR 19/06/90, 27 April 1990). In April 1990, four other rural workers (Ronan Rafael Ventura, Brás Antônio de Oliveira, Paulo Canuto de Oliveira and José Canuto de Oliveira) were abducted and killed and a fifth (Orlando Canuto de Oliveira) wounded in Rio Maria. The Canuto brothers' father, João Canuto de Oliveira, had been killed in 1985. Like Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, they were associated with the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B), a legal political organization, and were active in defending rural workers of the region.

In late April a delegation of federal deputies and Fr. Ricardo Rezende Figueira, of the Pastoral Land Commission, asked Brazil's then-Justice Minister, Bernardo Cabral, for federal protection for Expedito Ribeiro de Souza and Carlos Cabral Pereira, son-in-law of João Canuto de Oliveira. The Canuto brothers' alleged killers reportedly had said that those two men would be the next to die. The Justice Minister reportedly promised action but none was apparently taken. The Pará state security chief reportedly sent one soldier to protect Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, but the soldier left the area after a few days. At the time of his killing, Expedito Ribeiro de Souza reportedly was not receiving any protection from the authorities.

At the end of 1990 a special state commission identified two military police as the killers of the Canuto brothers. One was reportedly jailed and the other was being held in military police barracks. Despite evidence pointing to the possible involvement of large landowners in these killings, no landowner is known to have been prosecuted in connection with them.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Members and leaders of rural workers trade unions representing peasant families in southern Pará have been the targets of death threats, assaults, abductions and killings. Amnesty International is concerned about widespread violence connected with land conflicts in Brazil. Since 1985, more than 250 trade unionists and their supporters have reportedly been killed in Pará, and hundreds of others elsewhere in Brazil. 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. The Brazilian authorities on all levels have persistently failed to take effective action to prevent or investigate the killings or to bring those responsible to justice. Most of the gunmen and those who apparently hired them remain at large.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern at the killing of Expedito Ribeiro de Souza in Rio Maria on 2 February 1991;
- urging that the inquiry into his killing be effectively carried out and that those

found responsible be brought to justice;

- requesting that special police protection be provided immediately for threatened trade unionists and PC do B members, including Roberto Silva, Carlos Cabral Pereira, and Valdério Pereira Santos;

- urging that investigations into earlier killings of João Canuto de Oliveira, José Canuto de Oliveira, Paulo Canuto de Oliveira, Ronan Rafael Ventura and Brás Antonio de Oliveira be completed and those responsible be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Sr. Ministro da Justiça do Brasil (Minister of Justice)  
 Sr. Jarbas Passarinho  
 Ministério da Justiça  
 Esplanada dos Ministérios  
 Bloco 23  
 70.064 Brasília DF, Brasil  
**Telegrams: Ministro Justica, Brasilia, Brazil**  
**Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR or 612313 MNJU BR**  
**Faxes: + 55 61 224 4357**

Sr. Governador de Estado do Pará (State Governor of Pará)  
 Sr. Hélio Mota Gueiros  
 Palácio Lauro Sodré  
 Praça D. Pedro II  
 66.000 Belém, PA, Brasil  
**Telegrams: Governador Para, Belem, Brazil**  
**Telexes: 911012 GOPA BR or 916978 GOPA BR**

Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública (Public Security Chief, Pará)  
 Estado do Pará  
 Sr. Mario Monteiro Malato  
 Rua 28 de Setembro 339  
 66.020 Belém, PA, Brasil  
**Telegrams: Secretario Seguranca Publica, Belem, Brazil**  
**Telexes: 911100 SSPB BR**

Eleovaldo de Jesus Miranda (Civil Police Chief)  
 Delegado de Polícia Civil  
 68553 Rio Maria, PA, Brazil  
**Telegrams: Policia Civil, Rio Maria, Para, Brazil**

**COPIES TO:**

Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Pastoral Land Commission)  
 Rua 14 de Abril N° 1400  
 Centro Social Sagrado Coração de Jesus  
 Caixa Postal 21  
 Conceição do Araguaia  
 CEP 68.540 Pará, Brasil

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 5 March 1991.