

# URGENT ACTION

## COMMUNITY THREATENED AND AT RISK OF EVICTION

**Forty families from the Rio dos Macacos community in Brazil are being repeatedly threatened by naval officers who are trying to force them off their lands. The officers have destroyed houses and threatened community members at gunpoint.**

Around 40 families in the municipality of Simões Filho in Salvador, Bahia state, are fighting for land rights as a *quilombola* (Afro-descent) community. The community have lived on the land as subsistence farmers for over a century. An eviction order, which had been suspended, will come into effect on 4 March. As the dispute has intensified, community members have complained that heavily armed naval personnel have repeatedly entered the community, verbally abused residents, entered homes without permission, destroyed crops and demolished houses. The community claims that armed guards control access to the community and have stopped residents from entering and leaving, while also blocking the entry of government officials responsible for carrying out the technical studies required for the land to be officially recognized as *quilombola*.

One resident said: "Today I live in fear inside my own house" [*"Hoje eu vivo com medo dentro da minha própria casa."*] Another said: "The guys from the naval base put a gun to my head and said that they were going to fire. They didn't want me to talk - they said that I was talking too much." [*"Os rapazes da Marinha botaram a arma na minha cabeça e disseram que iam atirar. Eles não queriam que eu conversasse, disseram que eu tava conversando muito."*]

In the 1960s The Aratu Naval Base was established on neighbouring lands. In 2009 a local judge issued an eviction order to allow for the extension of the base. The order was challenged by the community and federal prosecutors, culminating in the registering of the community as a *quilombola* community on 14 October 2010 by the Fundação Cultural Palmares – the first step in the process of gaining land title as a *quilombola* community. Since this decision, the threats have intensified.

### Please write immediately in Portuguese or your own language:

- Call on the authorities to suspend the eviction order against the Rio dos Macacos community while the status of the lands are resolved, and ensure residents are provided with protection in accordance to their wishes;
- Urge the authorities to investigate thoroughly all allegations of threats and intimidation against the community and bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on them to ensure a swift and transparent conclusion to the process to designate *quilombola* status so as to ensure its effective and long-term security.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 APRIL 2012 TO:

#### Federal Minister of Defense

Exmo. Sr. Celso Amorim  
Esplanada dos Ministérios,  
Bloco "Q" 70.049-900 - Brasília/DF  
Brazil  
Fax: + 55 61 3312 8521 (please keep trying)  
**Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Ministro**

#### Federal Human Rights Secretary

Exma Sra. Ministra Maria do Rosário  
Nunes  
Setor Comercial Sul-B, Quadra 9, Lote C  
Edifício Parque Cidade Corporate,  
Torre "A", 10º andar,  
70308-200 – Brasília/DF, Brazil  
Fax: + 55 61 2025 9414  
**Salutation: Exma. Sra. Ministra**

#### **And copies to:**

Movimento dos Pescadores e Pescadoras  
Travessa Porto do Bomfim n 04,  
Bomfim, cep 40.415-035  
Salvador-Bahia  
Brazil  
Fax: +55 71 3321 4423 (please keep trying)

**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 predominantly afro-descendent ethnic groups who define themselves through their relationships with the land, ancestry and cultural traditions. The 1988 Brazilian Constitution (Articles. 215 and 216) acknowledges their right to land. In particular, Article 68 of the Transitory Dispositions states 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 introduced to regulate how the *quilombola* lands are identified and how titles are to be given to the remaining communities.

In addition to the national legislation, Brazil is 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 around 3,500 *quilombola* communities in Brazil. Over half have been officially certified, but only 120 have completed the long and complicated process of recognition and gained title to their land. Many claims involve disputes – often violent – with local landowners. A series of cases have involved disputes with military bases, including Marambaia in Rio de Janeiro state and Alcântara in Maranhão state.

Name: 40 Families of the Rio dos Macacos community

Gender m/f: Both

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