

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Threats

22 February 1991

BRAZIL: **Father Ricardo REZENDE**
 Carlos CABRAL PEREIRA
 Roberto NETO DA SILVA
 Valdério PEREIRA DOS SANTOS
 Orlando CANUTO

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Father Ricardo Rezende, former coordinator of the Pastoral Land Commission of Conceição do Araguaia, and of Carlos Cabral Pereira, Roberto Neto da Silva, Valdério Pereira dos Santos and Orlando Canuto, leaders of the Rural Workers Union of Rio Maria, Pará, Brazil, who have been receiving death threats.

On 2 February 1991 Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the same union, was shot dead 200 metres from his home, at Rio Maria (see UA 40/91, AMR 19/02/91, 6 February 1991). Expedito Ribeiro de Souza was the fourth leader of the Rio Maria Union murdered since 1985. A gunman has since been arrested by the police and charged with his murder, but those who ordered the crime (mandantes) have not been arrested. It is believed that the crime is related to disputes between rural workers and local landowners.

The five named above have been receiving death threats for more than a year, as had Expedito Ribeiro de Souza. Father Ricardo Rezende has been singled out as next in Expedito de Souza's murderers' list. Carlos Cabral Pereira is Expedito de Souza's successor as union president, and brother-in-law of José and Paulo Canuto, abducted and killed in April 1990. Orlando Canuto, treasurer of the union, is brother of José and Paulo and son of João Canuto de Oliveira, former president of the union, also killed in 1985. Orlando was abducted with his brothers and is the only survivor of the assassination attempt.

Valdério Pereira dos Santos is a former president of the union. Both his predecessor and his successor have been killed. Roberto Neto da Silva is a union member and president of the local branch of the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B), a legal political organization to which both the Canuto brothers and Expedito Ribeiro de Souza belonged.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members and leaders of rural trade unions representing peasant families in southern Pará have been the targets of death threats, assaults, abductions and killing. According to the Pastoral Land Commission, 173 rural workers have been killed since May 1980 in the diocese of Conceicao do Araguaia, to which Rio Maria belongs. Amnesty International is concerned about widespread violence connected with lands conflicts 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 a high degree of impunity. 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.

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

- requesting that special police protection be immediately provided for Father Ricardo Rezende, Carlos Cabral Pereira, Roberto Neto Silva, Valdério Pereira dos Santos and Orlando Canuto;

- urging that the inquiry into the killing of Expedito Ribeiro de Souza be effectively carried out and that those found responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Sr. Ministro de Justiça do Brasil (Minister of Justice)
 Sr. Jarbas Passarinho
 Ministério de Justiça
 Esplanada dos Ministerios
 Bloco 23
 70.064 Brasilia DF, Brasil
Telegrams: Ministro Justiça, Brasilia, Brazil
Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR; 611088 MNJU BR; 6122313 MNJU BR
Faxes + 55 61 224 4357

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

Sr. Secretario de Segurança Publica (Public Security Chief, Pará)
 Estado do Pará
 Sr. Mario Monteiro Malato
 Rua 28 de Setembro 339
 66.020 Belém, PA, Brasil
Telegrams: Secretario Segurança 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 April 1991.