

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety

08 October 2004

BRAZIL

Parada de Lucas in Rio

Residents of the *favelas* (shanty towns) of Vigário Geral and de Janeiro

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of residents of the *favelas* (shanty towns) of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas in the city of Rio de Janeiro. This follows a recent escalation in violence between rival drug gangs which has left both communities vulnerable and exposed.

On 3 October, in Rio de Janeiro, a group of heavily armed men from the *favela* of Parada de Lucas occupied the *favela* of Vigário Geral, expelling dozens of families who they allege have links with a rival gang. Despite the fact that hundreds of civilians were displaced, and forced to take refuge in neighbouring communities, the police did not take any action to restore order until 8 October after pressure from Amnesty International and other organisations.

Whilst Amnesty International welcomes initial reports that the police occupation of Vigário Geral has been carried out peacefully, the situation remains very tense, and the organization has received information that the rival gangs are likely to carry out "revenge" attacks, possibly targeting innocent civilians. It is therefore crucial that the police protect both communities for as long as is necessary to guarantee that the civilian population will not suffer revenge attacks. It is also essential that the authorities in Rio ensure that the police carry out their work without resorting to human rights violations such as excessive use of force, torture or ill-treatment.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The situation in Rio de Janeiro has been of serious concern to Amnesty International for many years. Last year, the organisation published "*Rio 2003: Candelária and Vigário Geral 10 years on*" (AMR 19/015/2003, August 2003) which reported on systematic human rights violations by the city's police forces, including very high numbers of unlawful killings. In 1993, 21 innocent residents of Vigário Geral were killed by a police "death squad". Powerful drug gangs, which engage in violent disputes over territory, operate in poor parts of the city. The civilian population in such areas are often victims of violent and discriminatory police actions. At the same time they can be caught in the crossfire between rival drug gangs.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Portuguese or your own language:**

- welcoming reports that on 8 October 2004 military police peacefully restored order to the *favelas* of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas;
- expressing your concern at reports that rival drug gangs are planning revenge attacks, possibly targeting innocent civilians;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the police protect both communities for as long as is necessary to guarantee the safety of the residents of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas;
- urging the authorities to ensure that the police carry out their work without resorting to human rights violations;
- calling on Rio's authorities to give priority to the necessary reforms and investments that will ensure effective public security and safety for the entire city's population.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

State Governor of Rio de Janeiro

Rosinha Garotinho

Governadora do Estado do Rio de Janeiro

Palácio Guanabara - Rua Pinheiro Machado s/n°  
Laranjeiras,  
Rio de Janeiro /RJ, Brasil  
**Fax: + 55 21 2553 6247**  
**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

State Public Security Secretary (Interim) of Rio de Janeiro  
Marcelo Itagiba  
Secretário de Estado de Segurança Pública do Rio de Janeiro (Interino)  
Av. Pres. Vargas, 817 - 15º andar (Gabinete)  
20071-004 Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil  
**Fax: + 55 21 3399 1169**  
**Salutation: Exmo. Sr Secretário / Dear Secretary**

Mayor of Rio de Janeiro  
César Maia  
Prefeito do Rio de Janeiro  
Rua Afonso Cavalcanti, 455  
20211-110 Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil  
**Fax: +55 21 2273 9977**  
**Salutation: Exmo Sr Prefeito / Dear Mayor**

**COPIES TO:**  
Federal Human Rights Secretary  
Secretário Especial dos Direitos Humanos  
Nilmário Miranda  
Esplanada dos Ministérios - Bl. - T - 4º andar  
70064-900 - Brasília/DF, Brasil  
**Fax: + 55 61 223 2260**  
**Salutation: Exmo. Sr Secretário / Dear Secretary**

Afroreggae Cultural Group (NGO)  
Grupo Cultural Afroreggae  
Apartamento 203  
Rua Candido Mendes 157  
Gloria  
20241-220 Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 November 2004