

26 July 2002

Further information on UA 176/02 (AMR 19/007/2002, 12 June 2002) - Death Threats/Impunity New concern: Fear for Safety

BRAZIL Dr Agisandro da Costa Pereira, President of Ordem dos Advogados Brasileiros (OAB), Brazilian Lawyers' Association
Members of his family and work colleagues
Dra Maria Aparecida Denadai (f) - lawyer

Izaias Santana Rocha (m) - President of the state council for human rights (an alliance of non-governmental organizations)

New names: Members of the OAB and human rights defenders in Espírito Santo

A bomb exploded early in the evening of 25 July in the offices of the *Ordem dos Advogados Brasileiros* (OAB), Brazilian Lawyers' Association, in Vitória, the capital of Espírito Santo state. At the time of the explosion, which fortunately led to no injuries or deaths, a ceremony recognizing new members of the OAB was taking place. Dr Agisandro Pereira, the president of the OAB, and 130 other lawyers and functionaries were in the building at the time of the explosion. Dr Agisandro Pereira's federal police escort was also present. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Dr Agisandro Pereira and all members of the OAB, and for human rights defenders in Espírito Santo, who receive constant death threats.

Dr Agisandro Pereira and members of the OAB in Espírito Santo have also received recent telephone death threats. On 23 July, the day before a group of members were due to greet Dr Agisandro Pereira at Vitória airport, an anonymous caller told one of the association's directors "*E bom mesmo que lá a gente metralha todo mundo*" ("It's great, because we'll machine gun the lot of you there [at the airport]"). In the hours after the bomb went off on 25 July, an anonymous caller to the OAB said, "*Vamos estourar todos vocês de uma vez só*" ("We're going to blow you all up in one go").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The bomb, which destroyed a toilet on the fourth floor of the building, demonstrates the lengths to which elements involved in organized crime in Espírito Santo are prepared to go in order to intimidate their opponents. Amnesty International has long publicised reported links between the police organisation *Scuderie Detetive le Coq* (SDLC), named after detective le Coq, and human rights violations and organized crime in the state. Amnesty International is also concerned that the recent decision by the Federal Attorney General not to recommend federal intervention in the state has been taken as a tacit sign of approval of these elements, who have stepped up their campaign of terror and intimidation against those who oppose them.

Earlier this month, the federal Ministry of Justice's Human Rights Council recommended full federal intervention in Espírito Santo. However the decision to go ahead with this was withheld by the Federal Attorney General following a meeting with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Amnesty International expressed its concern that the decision of the Federal Attorney General was directly influenced by political and electoral considerations, as no apparent judicial reasons for the decision have been made public (see press releases NS 115, AMR 19/009/2002, 5 July 2002 and NS 117 AMR 19/010/2002, 9 July 2002). The Minister of Justice, the head of the Federal police and numerous other federal officials resigned in protest at this decision. Instead of full federal intervention, the new Minister of Justice is sending a special investigative task force to the state. The task force is made up mainly of federal police officers, and is mandated to investigate organized crime and protect those at risk. Some of its members have already travelled to Espírito Santo to begin their investigations.

On 25 July, at the second international consultation for human rights defenders in the Americas which took place in Guatemala, the final declaration of the meeting made special reference to the dangers faced by human rights defenders in Espírito Santo.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals in Portuguese or in your own language:

- expressing your concern at the bomb planted in the offices of the Espírito Santo branch of the Brazilian Lawyer's Association (OAB) on 25 July;
- in the light of the bomb, and persistent death threats, urging the authorities to take all steps deemed necessary by those at risk to protect Dr Agisandro da Costa Pereira and other members of the Espírito Santo branch of the OAB, and human rights defenders in the state;
- expressing your concern that the recent decision to withhold federal intervention by the Federal Attorney General appears to have encouraged the activities of organised crime in the state, as demonstrated by the bomb planted in the offices of the OAB;
- calling on the federal authorities to ensure that the federal task force being sent to Espírito Santo is provided with the full and sustained political and financial support it needs to effectively fulfil its role;
- urging that the federal task force be clearly mandated to investigate the long history of unpunished human rights crimes in the state, and bring to justice those responsible.

APPEALS TO:

President of Brazil

Exmo. Sr. Presidente da República Federativa do Brasil
 Sr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso
 Gabinete do Presidente
 Palácio do Planalto, 3º andar, sala 25
 70150-900 Brasília - DF, Brazil

Telegrams: Gabinete do Presidente, Brasília - DF, Brazil

Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

Fax: +55 61 411 2222 / 224 0289

Federal Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça
 do Brasil
 Paulo de Tarso Ramos Ribeiro

Ministério da Justiça
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco "T"
CEP 70064-900 Brasília - DF, Brazil
Telegrams: Ministério da Justiça, Brasília - DF, Brazil
Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency
Fax: +55 61 322 6817 / 225 9089

Federal Secretary for Human Rights

Sr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro
Secretaria de Estado dos Direitos Humanos_
Ministério da Justiça_
Esplanada dos Ministérios,
Bloco T, 4º andar, Sala 420_
70064-900 Brasília - DF, Brazil
Telegrams: Secretario de Estado dos Direitos Humanos, Brasília - DF, Brazil
Fax: + 55 61 226 7980
Salutation: Exmo.Sr, Secretário/Dear Federal Secretary

COPIES TO:

Governor, Espírito Santo
Sr. José Ignácio Ferreira
Governador do Estado do Espírito Santo
Palácio Anchieta
29015-110, Vitória-ES, Brazil
Telegrams: Governador José Ignácio Ferreira, Vitória-ES, Brazil
Fax: + 55 27 3223 0815
Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

Brazilian Lawyers' Association
Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil - Espírito Santo
Rua Soldado Abílio dos Santos, N°9
29015-620, Vitória - ES, Brazil

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 6 September 2002.