

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death threats / Fear for safety

29 September 1994

**BRAZIL**      **Father Ricardo Rezende, priest**  
                 **Brother Henri des Rosiers, priest & lawyer**  
                 **Father Benedito Rodrigues Costa, priest**  
                 **Elpídio Pereira da Silva, municipal councillor**

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Amnesty International is alarmed at reports of the existence of a "hit-list" of some 40 people in the town of Xinguara, in the state of Pará. It is reported that six people whose names appear on the list are already dead, two have been the victims of attack, and others, fearing for their lives, have fled the area.

According to evidence given by *pistoleiros* (gunmen) already charged in connection with related incidents, those named on the list have been singled out to be killed because of their links with *posseiros* (peasant farmers) involved in local land conflicts; Father Ricardo Rezende, Brother Henri des Rosiers, Father Benedito Rodrigues Costa and Elpídio Pereira da Silva are believed to be among the names on that list. The names of various small businessmen and property owners in Xinguara are also alleged to appear on the list.

A *pistoleiro* currently being held in Paraúna, Goias State, accused of attempted murder also confessed in a statement given to local police on 21 September 1994 that he had been contracted by someone to kill "a certain Father Ricardo Rezende".

On 23 September, a man telephoned Father Ricardo's house to say, "*Tell Father Ricardo that his days are numbered and tell those who work with him to watch out too*" ("*Para avisar ao padre Ricardo que seus dias estão contados e para avisar tambem o pessoal que trabalha com ele*").

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In the past, church figures and those seen to be supporting or representing the interests of peasant families in southern Pará in the context of land disputes with local landowners, have been the targets of death threats, assaults, abductions and killing. While Amnesty International takes no position on competing claims in this type of conflict, it is concerned at the impunity with which gunmen, allegedly acting on behalf of landowners, and with the apparent tolerance of local authorities, continue to intimidate and carry out violent attacks on the peasant communities.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Portuguese or in your own language:**

- calling for an investigation to be carried out without delay into the alleged "death-list" naming some 40 people in Xinguara;
- urging that immediate action be taken to ensure the safety of Father Ricardo Rezende, Brother Henri des Rosiers, Father Benedito Rodrigues Costa and Elpídio Pereira da Silva and their colleagues;
- demanding that those responsible for the above threats and the apparent persecution of people involved in land conflicts be swiftly identified and brought to justice.

#### **APPEALS TO**

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça  
Dr. Alexandre Dupreyrat  
Esplanada dos Ministérios  
Bloco 23  
70.064 Brasília DF, Brazil  
**Telegrams: Min Justiça Dupreyrat, Brasília, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 61 321 5172**  
**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

Public Security Chief, Pará State  
Exmo. Sr.  
Doutor Alfredo Lima Henriques Santalices  
Secretário de Estado de Segurança Pública  
Estado de Pará  
Rua 28 de Setembro 339  
66010-100 Belém PA, Brazil  
**Telegrams: Sec de Estado de Segurança Pública, Belém-PA, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 91 223 3706**  
**Salutation: Sr. Secretário / Dear Sir**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Rio Maria Committee (Pará)  
Comité Rio Maria  
Caixa Postal 07  
CEP 55.530-000  
Rio Maria PA, Brazil

Pastoral Land Commission  
Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT)  
Caixa Postal 749  
CEP 74.001-970 Goiânia  
Goiás, 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 10 November 1994.