

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 19/13/98

UA 127/98

Fear for safety

22 April 1998

**BRAZIL Cecilia Coimbra and other members of the human rights organization Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais**

---

There is serious concern for the safety of members of the human rights organization, *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais*, (GTNM) Torture Never Again Group, after they recently received a number of anonymous death threats and suffered other forms of intimidation.

The threats followed the group's public statements about the possible participation of two army generals, recently promoted by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in human rights violations during the military regime of 1964-1985. The two generals reportedly participated in arrests, raids and house searches during the regime. The GTNM have publicly requested the President to undertake an investigation into the two officers' possible involvement in acts of torture.

On 3 April 1998 Cecília Coimbra, president of the GTNM, received at least one anonymous, threatening phone call at her home. She was also reportedly followed for two days. Pamphlets, signed by "Torture Forever Group", have been circulated attacking *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* and mentioning Cecília Coimbra by name.

On 8 April, the following anonymous telephone message was left on the answer-machine at the group's office: "*quem está falando aqui é um amigo da causa de vocês. Avisa pra Dona Cecília que tem gente aprontando feio pra cima de vocês. Toma muito cuidado, muito cuidado, que não é coisa leve, não. É coisa pesada. E tem outra coisa: toma cuidado aí com a floricultura. Eu não vou me identificar, para minha própria segurança. Cuidado, o pessoal tá aprontando e é pra valer*", "This is a friend speaking. Tell Cecília that there are some people out to get you. Be careful, very careful. This is no joke. This is heavy. And another thing, watch out with the flowers [the offices of the organization are above a flowershop]. I can't tell you who I am, for my own safety. Watch out, they're really going to get you this time."

The group have been refused police protection by the Superintendent of the Federal Police in Rio de Janeiro on the grounds that it is not in the police's mandate to provide this. The Secretary of Public Security for the state of Rio de Janeiro has, likewise, refused protection citing a lack of manpower.

Amnesty International knows of no police inquiry having been opened into the threats.

*Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* believes that the threats may be linked to *Militares de Reserva*, the Reserve Forces of the army, whose latest newsletter reportedly contained three articles critical of the GTNM and of Cecília Coimbra.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

*Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* was established in 1985 by relatives of those killed, tortured or "disappeared" under the military dictatorship. They have played a key role in pushing the government for information concerning the identity, whereabouts and fate of victims of military rule, and in exposing the role played by members of the security forces who are still in active service. In March 1998 they were also involved in a high profile campaign against President Cardoso's promotion of an army doctor who they alleged had

participated in torture sessions during the military rule. The doctor in question had already been struck off by the *Conselho Federal de Medicina*, Federal Medical Council, for this reason. The controversy surrounding this case forced the doctor to eventually leave his post on extended leave. The 1979 Amnesty Law exempts from prosecution members of the military government who committed human rights violations.

Many human rights defenders in Brazil are frequently subjected to threats, harassment and attempts on their lives. In many cases human rights defenders have received Federal Police protection, and the government is currently attempting to extend the federal police's powers to investigate and prevent human rights violations.

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

- calling on the authorities to provide protection to the members of *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais*;
- urging the authorities to open a full, immediate and impartial enquiry into the threats against Cecília Coimbra and other members of the organization and to bring those responsible to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

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

**Telegrams: Presidente da República, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 61 411 2222 / 226 7566**  
**Salutation: Vossa Excelência / Your Excellency**

Public Security Secretary, Rio de Janeiro  
 Secretário de Segurança Pública  
 Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública do Estado de Rio de Janeiro  
 Dr. Noaldo Alves Silva  
 Av. Presidente Vargas, Nº 817, 15º andar, Centro  
 Rio de Janeiro RJ  
 20231-110 Brazil

**Telegrams: Secretário Segurança Pública, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**  
**Faxes: + 55 21 252 8252 (if voice ask for fax)**  
**Salutation: Sr. Secretário / Dear Secretary**

**COPIES TO:**

Secretary, Human Rights Secretariat  
 Exmo. Sr. Secretário dos Direitos Humanos  
 Dr. José Gregori  
 Secretário Nacional dos Direitos Humanos  
 Ministério da Justiça, Esplanada dos Ministérios  
 Bloco T, Anexo II, 2º Andar  
 Brasília DF, 70064-900, Brazil

**Faxes: + 55 61 225 0440 (if voice ask "me puede dar tono de fax por favor")**

Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais  
 Rua General Polidoro 238 s/loja  
 Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro, RJ

CEP 22280-000

**Faxes:** + 55 21 286 0428

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 22 May 1998.