

UA 300/99

Fear for**BRAZILJoilce Gomes Santana (f), Lawyer**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of lawyer Joilce Gomes Santana, who continues to suffer persecution by members of a death squad. Joilce Gomes Santana, who acts on behalf of victims of death squad violence, has been threatened with death in the past.

Joilce Gomes Santana is working on a number of cases implicating police in the activities of a death squad operating in Natal, capital of the north-eastern state of Rio Grande do Norte. Her former secretary recently made a statement to police that she had received telephone calls threatening her and her children, and that she had been coerced into handing over documents related to the case of a policeman charged with several violent crimes.

Human rights groups have appealed to the authorities to provide Joilce Gomes Santana with protection when she has been threatened before, so that she can continue her human rights work, so far they have not responded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 19 March 1999, an anonymous caller telephoned Joilce Gomes Santana at her office and threatened "to torture her and leave her in pain for the rest of her life to stop her from working on human rights cases." ("torturá-la físicamente e deixá-la machucada até o fim de sua vida para afastá-la dos casos dos direitos humanos"). He also made sexually explicit threats against her. When she was driving home soon afterwards three cars chased hers and tried to force her off the road.

Joilce Gomes Santana is working on a number of cases, including that of Francisco Gilson Nogueira. Gilson Nogueira, a lawyer with the *Centro de Direitos Humanos e Memória Popular* (CDHMP), Centre for Human Rights and Collective Memory, was killed in 1996 while working with a special commission set up to investigate the activities of a death squad known as *Meninos de Ouro*, Golden Boys. The death squad, which includes police officers, allegedly enjoys the protection of the Rio Grande do Norte state authorities and is believed to be responsible for numerous killings and acts of torture, mainly in the poor neighborhoods of Natal. Joilce Gomes Santana has also taken up the case of Antônio Lopes (known as "Carla"), who was killed in March this year after conducting his own private investigations into the death of Gilson Nogueira.

Human rights defenders in Brazil are vulnerable to death threats, intimidation and attacks by police, death squads and hired gunmen, which operate with official acquiescence. Colleagues of Francisco Nogueira at the CDHMP have been intimidated and harassed and, together with several state officials, placed on a death list (See EXTRA 49/99, AMR 19/08/99, 6 April 1999). CDHMP member Luis Gonzaga Dantas moved away in 1997 for his safety and that of his family.

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

- expressing concern about the continued persecution of Joilce Gomes Santana, and the attempt to sabotage her human rights work;
- expressing concern that she and others working on death squad-related cases in Rio Grande do Norte have been threatened and killed;

- expressing concern that employees of Joilce Gomes Santana are alleged to have been coerced by death threats into handing over confidential documents;
- calling on the authorities to provide her with protection to enable her to continue her human rights work;
- calling on the authorities to investigate the alleged theft of documents, with a view to ensuring the protection of any individuals whose safety may have been compromised by the handing over of confidential information;
- calling on the authorities to take steps to end death squad activity in the state of Rio Grande do Norte.

APPEALS TO:Secretary of State for Human Rights

Exmo. Sr Secretário de Estado dos Direitos Humanos
 Sr. José Gregori
 Secretaria de Estado dos Direitos Humanos_
 Ministério da Justiça_
 Esplanada dos Ministérios,
 Bloco T, Ed Sede, Sala 420_
 70064-901 Brasília DF
 Brazil

Telegrams: Secretaria Direitos Humanos, Brasília, Brazil**Faxes: + 55 61 223 2260_****Salutation: Exmo. Sr. / Dear Sir**Governor - Rio Grande do Norte

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte
 Dr. Garibaldi Alves Filho
 Governadoria do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte
 Centro Administrativo - Lagoa Nova
 59064-901, Natal, RN, Brazil

Telegrams: Governadoria Estado, Natal, RN, Brazil**Faxes: + 55 84 204 7090****Salutation: Your Excellency / Vossa Excelência**Public Security Secretary - Rio Grande do Norte

Exmo. Sr. Secretário de Segurança Pública do Rio Grande do Norte
 General José Carlos Leite Filho
 Secretaria de Segurança Pública do Rio Grande do Norte
 Praça Augusto Severo, 261 - Ribeira
 59012-380, Natal, RN, Brazil

Telegrams: Secretaria Segurança Pública, Natal, RN, Brazil**Faxes: + 55 84 211 4866 / 221 2779 (if voice answers say: por favor dar o sinil do fax****Salutation: Exmo. Sr. / Dear Sir****COPIES TO:**

Dra. Joilce Gomes Santana
 Rua Vigário Bartolomeu, 635 - Edf. 21 de Março
 Conj/S1 706/707
 59028-900, Natal, RN, 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 28 December 1999.