

UA 373/00

Fear for

**BRAZIL**Francisco Ferreira de Carvalho]  
Francisco De Assis Solidade]  
José Soares de Brito]  
Izalda Atlino Brandao]trade unionists  
Francisco Salvador]  
João Batista Pino]  
Moacir Abreu da Silva]  
Vicente Pereira de Souya]  
Hélio Mario Maciel]  
Douglas dos Santos]  
Eurival Marins Carvalho]

**Members of *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT) Pastoral Land Commission, in Marabá.**

A trade unionist who had received several death threats has been killed in Rondon do Pará, in Pará state. He had been named on a death list: there is serious concern for the safety of other trade unionists on the list, named above. CPT members working on issues of land rights have also received death threats.

José Dutra da Costa, president of the *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais de Rondon do Pará* (STR), Trade Union of Rural Workers of Rondon do Pará, was shot dead in front of his house on 21 November. His name had been published on a "death list" which circulated in May 1999. Two other STR members named on this list were killed in 1999. The CPT reported this death list to the Pará state authorities, but they did nothing to protect any of those named on the list.

José Dutra da Costa managed to grapple with the man who shot him, and neighbours caught the man and handed him over to the police. He said that he had been paid to kill José Dutra da Costa. There is evidence that the man who paid him was an intermediary hired by a group of landowners. One of the landowners believed to have ordered the killing has since been arrested. This is a positive step, but it raises fears for others named on the "death list" and CPT members in Marabá, who may face reprisals from the landowners and their allies.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

There are conflicts between landless peasants and large landowners throughout rural Brazil. Landless leaders, trade unionists and land activists are often threatened and attacked by gunmen in the pay of landowners. State authorities often fail to take action to stop these crimes or bring those responsible to justice.

The state of Pará has long been the focal point for the killings of land activists by local landowners, which go unpunished for many years. The CPT, which is administered by the Catholic church, has worked tirelessly against these killings, and for the defence of land activists. Their work has brought them into conflict with landowners and their supporters in positions of authority.

Amnesty International has been working in collaboration with CPT members in the south of Pará for many years. The CPT have been tireless in their efforts to publicise the widespread violence perpetrated with total impunity. They have also supported many victims, and relatives of victims, through legal procedures that can last many years. Dedicated work by Amnesty International

members has helped the CPT to maintain pressure on both the federal and state authorities to investigate the violence perpetrated in the region and bring those responsible to trial.

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

- calling for immediate action to protect the threatened trade unionists and CPT members, in accordance with their own wishes, particularly in the light of possible reprisals;
- welcoming the arrest of a number of those believed to be responsible for the killing of José Dutra da Costa, but stressing that all threats and killings of land activists must be investigated, and all those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern at the failure of the authorities to prevent gunmen in the pay of landowners from carrying out attacks against those working on land rights;
- urging the Brazilian government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* adopted on 9 December 1998, and the Organization of American States *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution adopted on 7 June 1999 [AG/RES. 1671 (XXIX-O/99)].

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor Pará State

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**Salutation:Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

Minister of Justice

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça  
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**Salutation:Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

State Secretary of Public Security

Secretário de Segurança Pública  
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**COPIES TO:**

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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 16 January 2001.