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Brazil: Time to Deliver

The Brazilian government's project for the protection of human rights defenders, launched in Brasilia on 26 October 2004, is an important step in the fight for human rights in Brazil and throughout the region. The women and men who have dedicated their lives to fight for the protection of the rights of all members of society have consistently suffered killings, physical attacks and defamation among other things.

By launching this campaign the Brazilian government is sending a message to those who for so long have dismissed the work of these men and women as the 'defence of criminals' reminding the country of the invaluable contribution that they make to the creation of a truly just and secure society for all.

Nevertheless, this campaign will not be enough if effective political and financial support are not provided to ensure that it is not another empty promise. Amnesty International continues to receive reports of human rights defenders under threat who are offered little or no protection by either state or federal authorities. Similarly, investigations into those responsible for threats and attacks are at best ineffective at worst non-existent, with few of those responsible ever coming to trial.

The government has provided itself with a serious opportunity to deliver on its promise to invest in the protection of human rights. The international human rights community will be watching to see if it can do so.