

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Brazil: Eviction in Cascavel must not become an excuse for more violence.

“It is essential that all measures are taken to avoid the use of force by police officers when the judicial order to evict 200 rural workers from a farm belonging to Swiss multinational, Syngenta, is implemented within the next forty-eight hours, in Cascavel in Parana state,” Patrick Wilcken of Amnesty International stated today.

Amnesty International is also concerned at what efforts are being made to guarantee the rights of the families following the evictions in accordance with international human rights standards. To this end it urges the government to enter into talks with those representing the families to ensure that their immediate security and needs will be met.

On 21 October 2007 an illegal and violent eviction on the same farm led to the deaths of Valmir Motta de Oliveira (known as Keno), a leader of the landless workers movement (MST) and Fabio Ferreira a security guard. Keno and Fabio were killed and eight other members of the MST were injured when 40 heavily armed guards attacked the farm following its occupation by MST and Via Campesina.

The killings highlight the concern of the growing use, by landowners and companies, of irregular security companies acting effectively as armed militias in illegal and violent evictions, especially in the state of Paraná. Yet state and federal authorities are doing little to curb their activities. Following a previous such action in April 2007, federal police initiated an investigation into NF Segurança, the company hired by Syngenta, finding a number of irregularities including the possession of illegal ammunition. As a result of this federal police initiated a review of the company's operating licence, though a year later the review is not complete and the company continues to operate.

It is time that the state and federal authorities take those steps in their power to ensure that the continued violence and killings of land activists are stopped. This includes the immediate closure of irregular security companies and the investigation and prosecution of those linked to promoting or supporting their illicit activities.

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