

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 19/20/00

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK ACTION

To: Human Rights Defenders Network - Latin America

From: Human Rights Defenders Program - Latin America

Date: 31 July 2000

Duration: until 31 September 2000

Country: Brazil

Network No: AMR-HRD 01/00

Action: All Network members are requested to send appeals to the local press and the Governor of Pará State, Brazil.

Amnesty International network members are also requested to contact Police Associations in their country and ask them to send appeals to the Police Authorities in Pará State, Brazil.

BRAZIL: Concern for the safety of members of the *Comissão Pastoral de Terra* (CPT), Pastoral Land Commission in Xinguara, Pará State

Summary

Frei (Brother) Henri de Rosiers, works as a lawyer for the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT), Pastoral Land Commission, in Xinguara, in the south of Pará State.

On July 12 2000 the *Comissão Pastoral de Terra* (CPT), Pastoral Land Commission published a report denouncing police torture of prisoners. Following this the director of the Pará State Civil Police attacked Brother Henri de Rosiers in the press, calling him "radical, out of control, unbalanced" ("*radical, descontrolado, desequilibrado*"), and accusing him of involvement in the murder of a landowner.

As well as denouncing police violence, the CPT have been working to bring to justice those responsible for the killing of land activists in the region. As a result of such work in defence of human rights, Brother Henri de Rosiers was named on a death list in May 2000.

Brother Henri was the lawyer who prosecuted a powerful local landowner for the murder of land activist Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, president of the *Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais* (Union of Rural Workers), in February 1991. The landowner was convicted on 6 June 2000 and sentenced to 19 and a half years' imprisonment. The trial and conviction of a landowner for the murder of a land activist is unprecedented in Brazil, where those responsible for ordering such crimes often operate with the complicity or knowledge of state authorities. The 10-year campaign to secure this conviction is a testament to the struggle of the CPT against impunity. However the vast majority of killings of land activists remain unpunished.

There is serious concern that this latest public attack may put Brother Henri and other CPT staff at great risk of attack by members of local death squads, which reportedly act with police acquiescence. [Please see UA 134 AMR 19/13/00 and follow ups for further information on these cases.]

RECOMMENDED ACTION BY HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK:

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

- expressing grave concern that the director of the Civil Police has attacked Brother Henri de Rosiers in the media, with the clear intention of discrediting his work and that of the CPT;
- expressing concern that this may act as an incitement to the death squads that have already expressed their intention to attack Brother Henri and other CPT staff;
- calling on the Pará authorities to publicly repudiate the statements of the director of the Civil Police, and acknowledge the legitimacy of the human rights work of the CPT;
- asking what steps have been taken to investigate the existence of a death squad "death list" naming Brother Henri and others;
- stating that the international community has clearly recognized the valuable work of human rights organizations when, in 1998, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Defenders (*Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*) setting out principles to ensure human rights defenders can carry out their work without hindrance or fear of reprisals;
- urge all authorities in Pará State to apply these principles for the protection of human rights defenders and their work to promote human rights.

Please send your appeals to: (*for all numbers, if voice answers, say "fax, por favor," and wait for the tone*)

Local newspapers

O Liberal

Redação

Av 23 de Setembro 2473

66093-000, Belem - PA, Brasil

Fax: + 55 91 276 5615 / 216 5615

Provincia do Pará
Telefax: +55 91 212 5700 / 212 3643

Diário do Pará
Telefax: +55 91 241 5797

Governor Pará State

Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Pará
Sr. Almir José de Oliveira Gabriel
Palácio dos Despachos
Rod. Montenegro KM 9
66823-010, Belém - PA, Brazil
Telex: 038 91 1012 gopa br
Fax: + 55 91 248 0133
Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency

Please send copies to:

Pastoral Land Commission
Comissão Pastoral da Terra
Rua Pau Brasil 40
Caixa Postal 57
Xinguara, 68555-000, Pará, Brazil

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION BY AI SECTIONS: Please contact Police Federations/Associations in your country and ask them to send faxes/letters in Portuguese or their own language:

- expressing grave concern that the director of the Civil Police has attacked Brother Henri de Rosiers in the media, with the clear intention of discrediting his work and that of the CPT;
- expressing concern that this may act as an incitement to the death squads that have already made plain their intention to attack Brother Henri and other CPT staff;
- calling on the Secretary of Public Security of Pará State to publicly repudiate the statements of the director of the Civil Police, and acknowledge the legitimacy of the human rights work of the CPT.
- urge the Secretary of Public Security of Pará State to apply the principles for the protection of human rights defenders and their work to promote human rights as laid out in the UN Declaration on Defenders (*Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*) adopted in December 1998.

Police Associations should send their appeals to:

Secretário de Segurança Pública do Estado do Pará (Secretary of Public Security of Pará State)
Dr. Paulo Celso Sette Câmara
Rua Arcipreste M. Teodoro 305
66023-700, Belém - PA, Brazil
Fax: + 55 91 225 2644
Salutation: Vossa Excelência/ Your Excellency