

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 19/30/90

UA 449/90

Death Threats

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7 November 1990

BRAZIL: Manoel Pereira da Silva,

Director of the Rubbertappers, Smalholders and  
Rural Workers Union (SINPASA) of Rio Branco

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Amnesty International is concerned at the failure of the authorities to take action in connection with continuing threats to the lives of rubbertapper leaders in Acre state. These threats have intensified as the trial approaches of two men accused of murdering rubbertapper leader Chico Mendes on 22 December 1988.

Since July Manoel Pereira da Silva has been receiving threats to his life as a result of his leadership of attempts to stop deforestation on a ranch and on the neighbouring Figueira Extractive Reserve near Rio Branco. They began in July when a religious service he was attending was interrupted by threats against him and other participants.

Unknown men arrived at his house in the Figueira reserve in August and threatened to enter it, saying they were going to kill him. Manoel Pereira da Silva was not at home and so escaped attack. A few days later, while returning home, he was confronted by another man while on a bus near the Figueira reserve. The man said he had come to Acre to do away with him.

Requests by SINPASA and the National Rubbertappers Council for protection of Manoel Pereira da Silva were apparently denied by the governor's office and state secretary of public security, on the grounds that there were no proofs of any crime having been committed. In mid-September, after informing the Federal Police of the threats, Manoel Pereira da Silva went into hiding in Rio Branco. His family left their home in the Figueira reserve and are subsisting with the help of friends.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Manoel Pereira da Silva has been active in the rural union movement since 1981. In 1989 a ranch owner tried to cut down 2,000 hectares of forest already occupied by rubbertappers. A protest action (empate) by Manoel Pereira da Silva and other rubbertappers temporarily stopped the deforestation. The owner then presented an environmental impact statement to IBAMA, the Brazilian environmental protection agency, which gave him permission to deforest the area lying next to the Figueira Extractive Reserve decreed in 1988. In mid-1990 Manoel Pereira da Silva charged that lumbermen were trying to remove timber from the reserve; he then began receiving threats to his life. Several rubbertapper leaders in Acre who received similar threats during the past 10 years were subsequently killed. Only in the Chico Mendes case, which has attracted considerable international attention, have suspects been arrested and indicted. In other cases,

local, state and federal authorities have declined to provide protection to threatened peasant leaders and have failed to take effective action to investigate their killings or to bring to justice those responsible for organizing such murders. (See ua 205/90, AMR 19/13/90 and UA 217/90, AMR19/15/90 for details of threats to other rubbertapper leaders in Acre.)

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/airmail letters:**

- expressing concern at reported death threats to Manoel Pereira da Silva in Rio Branco, Acre;

- urging that Manoel Pereira da Silva and other threatened rubbertapper leaders receive special protection to prevent their being assassinated;

- calling for investigation and prosecution of outstanding murder cases of rubbertapper leaders, including Wilson Pinheiro (1980) and Ivair Higino (1988).

**APPEALS TO:****(Minister of Justice)**

Exmo Sr Jarbas Passarinho  
Ministro da Justiça  
Ministerio da Justiça  
Esplanada dos Ministérios  
70064 Brasilia DF, Brazil

Telegrams: Ministro Justica, Brasilia, Brazil  
Telexes: 611003 MNJU BR, 611088 MNJU BR or 612313 MNJU BR

**(Secretary of Public Security)**

Secretário de Segurança Pública  
Estado de Acre  
Dr. Carlos Alberto da Silva  
Av. Getúlio Vargas  
Palácio da Secretarias, Subsolo  
69.900, Rio Branco, AC, Brazil

Telegrams: Secretario de Seguranca Publica da Silva, Rio Branco, AC, Brazil

**(Superintendent of Federal Police, Acre)**

Sr. Superintendente da Polícia Federal do Acre  
Superintendencia Regional  
Rua Floriano Peixote 744, Centro  
69.000 Rio Branco, AC, Brazil

Telegrams: Acre Policia Superintendente, Rio Branco, AC, Brazil

**COPIES TO:****(National Council of Rubbertappers)**

Conselho Nacional dos Seringueiros  
Rua Thaumatergo Azevedo 51  
Centro  
69.900 Rio Branco, AC, Brazil

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office if sending appeals after 31 December 1990.