

# URGENT ACTION



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21 November 2007

UA 313/07 Death Threats/ Fear for safety

**BRAZIL** **Brother Henri de Rosiers (m), aged about 77, human rights defender and lawyer**

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Brother Henri de Rosiers (known as Frei Henri), a lawyer and human rights defender, is in grave danger.

According to the non-governmental organization *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Pastoral Land Commission, CPT), the Xinguara Military Police, in the south of Pará state, have said that three men were hired to kill Frei Henri for the alleged sum of R\$50,000 (US\$25,000) in October 2007. Frei Henri has received death threats over a number of years in connection with his work in defense of human rights (see UA 134/00, 25 May 2000, and follow-ups). His name is allegedly on a "death list" believed to have been drawn up by local landowners.



Frei Henri has been receiving 24-hour protection from military police officers since the murder of Sister Dorothy Stang, an environmental activist who was the target of many death threats, in February 2005. However, the authorities have apparently not attempted to investigate the latest threat to the life of Frei Henri; nor have they made serious efforts to investigate previous threats or the existence of the death list or take steps to disarm local militias.

Frei Henri has worked for many years as a lawyer for the CPT in Xinguara. The CPT defends land activists, rural workers and the landless, in a state notorious for violence and impunity.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The southern part of Pará state is one of the most violent regions in Brazil. According to the CPT, 814 people were murdered between 1971 and 2006 in connection to disputes over land. In 2006, the CPT has documented 118 land activists who have received death threats.

Reports by the Federal Commission of Human Rights have stated that security companies, effectively acting as armed militias, have offered specific prices for the killings of those active in the fight for human rights and access to land. In 2005, Sister Dorothy Stang was killed by gunmen acting on behalf of local landowners. While this case received international attention and has led to prosecutions, hundreds of other killings remain uninvestigated. According to the CPT, of the 814 people were murdered between 1971 and 2006, 568 cases remain unsolved. Ninety-two criminal cases resulted in just one imprisonment.

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***Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.***

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- ensure that Frei Henri de Rosiers continues to receive police protection that meets his needs, following reports that three men have been hired to kill him;
- calling on the authorities to thoroughly investigate the death threat against Frei Henri, and bring those responsible to justice;
- asking to be informed of the results of this investigation;
- calling on the authorities to thoroughly investigate the pattern of human rights abuses in the south of Pará state, including the existence of hired gunmen and local militias;
- calling for these gunmen and militias to be disarmed and brought to justice, along with those who hire them;
- noting the failure of the Pará state authorities to deal with the violence over many years, and the long record of impunity in the state;
- reminding the federal authorities of their duty to ensure that human rights defenders should be able to carry their work without fear of violence.

**APPEALS TO:**

**Governor Pará State**

Exmo. Sr. Governador do  
Estado do Pará  
Ana Júlia de Vasconcelos Carepa  
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**Fax: 011 55 91 3248 0133**

**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

**Minister of Justice**

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça  
do Brasil  
Tarso Fernando Herz Genro  
Ministério da Justiça  
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**Salutation: Vossa Excelência/Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

**Pastoral Land Commission**

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**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 1 January 2008.**