

14 February 2019

Brazil: Indigenous leader Cacique Babau asks for protection after a plot to kill him is revealed

Over the past few days, indigenous human rights defender **Cacique Babau** made public the existence of a plot to kill him and five of his family members. He received information about the plot at the end of January 2019. The human rights defender has asked national and Bahia state authorities to put protection measures in place.

Rosivaldo Ferreira da Silva, better known as [Cacique Babau](#), is the leader of the Serra do Padeiro Tupinambá village, located in the municipality of Buerarema, in Bahia. In their struggle for land rights, the Tupinambás have suffered a process of criminalisation, defamation, threats, and attempted killings that involve state agents and big farmers.

At the end of January, Cacique Babau received credible information about a plot to kill him, three of his brothers, and two of his nieces. After receiving the information, the human rights defender requested that the State Government of Bahia and the Federal Public Ministry implement protection measures for him and his family.

According to information received, the killings were to take place in the south of Bahia, where members of the Military and Civil police would stage a false traffic raid so as to plant illegal drugs and weapons in their car. A shooting would then take place, which would subsequently be portrayed as a confrontation, that would result in the killing of the human rights defender and his family members.

The illegal drugs and weapons, which would have been planted, would later be presented to TV and radio networks in the region as false proof of the human rights defender's illicit activities. This would serve to create a defamation campaign against him, to justify the lack of investigation, and to corroborate the authorities' version of events. A highly detailed account of the indigenous group's whereabouts and routines was disclosed in the plot, which reinforces its authenticity and exposes the high level of risk that the Tupinambá leader and his family are facing.

According to information received, the plot to kill Cacique Babau was developed in a meeting in which farmers, politicians, and members of the Military and Civil Police, were present. Their objective was to take control of the Tupinambá territory, given that the demarcation of the lands the indigenous group currently live in is still not finalised - the final stages of the demarcation process has been paused since 2016.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern at the increased level of threat that Cacique Babau and his family members are facing. In particular, Front Line Defenders is extremely concerned about the possible involvement of state security forces and politicians in this plot. Front Line Defenders expresses further concern for the lack of protection provided for the Tupinambá people and believes that the plot against Cacique Babau may be a reprisal for the Tupinambá's vindication of their rights to self-determination and access to their ancestral lands.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Brazil to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Cacique Babau, his family members, and all Tupinamba people, in coordination with them;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the alleged plot against Cacique Babau and his family, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Brazil are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations 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 by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 12 (2): *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director