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Brazil: Escalating threats against human rights lawyer Rivelino Zarpellon in the state of Pará

Since the end of 2017, human rights defender **Rivelino Zarpellon** has been the target of surveillance and threats. Between the end of April and the beginning of May 2018, the homes of several of the defenders' friends and relatives were visited by unknown men, travelling on motorcycles, who said they were looking for Rivelino Zarpellon. On 10 May 2018, the defender recorded the incessant passage of a suspicious motorcyclist on the street where he lives.

[Rivelino Zarpellon](#) is a human rights defender and a lawyer of 18 years. He is a legal advisor to the Union of Workers in Public Education of the State of Pará (SINTEPP) and the Union of Workers in Health in the State of Pará (SINDSAUDE). He is also the President of the Human Rights Commission of the Brazilian Bar Association (Xinguara Subsection). The human rights defender, who has been particularly active in the state of Pará, has worked on many emblematic cases, including cases of corruption that led to the dismissal of several judges in Pará's Xinguara District.

In conjunction with the Pastoral Commission of the Land of Pará (CPT-PA), Rivelino Zarpellon has also been working on the case of the [Pau D'Arco Massacre](#), where 10 rural workers were killed by police officers in May 2017. He was present during the plea bargain testimonies of two of the police officers involved in the massacre. Late last year, excerpts of the video of the testimonies were leaked and circulated in Whatsapp groups. Rivelino Zarpellon, who appears in the leaked videos, began receiving threats shortly afterwards and he heard rumours that his name was on a list of "people marked to die". The Federal Human Rights Defenders Program (PPDDH) was made aware of the threats and at the end of 2017 Rivelino Zarpellon was temporarily relocated outside of his hometown of Xinguara.

Upon returning home in early 2018, the human rights defender resumed his activities in the state of Pará. But at the end of April, new threats emerged. The homes of several of his friends and relatives were visited by unknown men, travelling on motorcycles, who said they were looking for him. At around 9:00 am on 10 May 2018 he recorded the incessant passage of a suspicious motorcyclist on the street where he lives. All the incidents were reported to the Federal Police, the PPDDH, the Secretariat of Public Security and Secretariat of Justice of the State of Pará.

These incidents come at a critical time in the Pau D'arco Massacre's investigations, as alerted by the Pastoral Commission of the Land of Pará, the Pará Society for the Defense of Human Rights (SDDH) and Terra de Direitos. A trial hearing was held between 2 and 18 April, for witnesses and accused, in the criminal action filed by the State Public Prosecutor against 17 officers from the Civilian Police and Military Police forces. The investigation recently focussed on new suspects and included 12 search and seizure warrants issued in the cities of Redenção and Belém (in the state of Pará), Goiânia (in the state of Goias), and Rio de Janeiro.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the safety of human rights defender Rivelino Zarpellon, as well as all of those organisations, lawyers, witnesses and families related to the investigation of Pau D'Arco Massacre. Front Line Defenders expresses further concern about the increasing persecution and levels of violence against those defending and protecting land rights in the state of Pará.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Brazil to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of human rights lawyer Rivelino Zarpellon, in coordination and agreement with the defender;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the intimidation and threats against Rivelino Zarpellon 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 Para state are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.