

13 June 2019

Brazil: trade unionist Carlos Cabral Pereira killed in the south of Pará

On 11 June 2019, trade unionist **Carlos Cabral Pereira** was killed in Rio Maria, southern Pará, after years of publicly denounced threats against him. He is the third president of the Rural Workers Trade Union of Rio Maria who was killed in relation to the defence of the right to land.

Carlos Cabral Pereira was the president of a trade union that represented rural workers of the community of Rio Maria, the **Sindicato dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras Rurais de Rio Maria** (Rural Workers Trade Union of Rio Maria), as well as one of the directors of the Central of Brazilian Workers (Central de Trabalhadores do Brasil). He was well recognised in the region as a social leader who promoted the rights to access to land by peasant workers.

At 4pm on 11 June 2019, Carlos Cabral Pereira was killed close his home in Setor Planalto, in the municipality of Rio Maria, in the southern area of the state of Pará. He was shot four times by two armed men on a motorcycle wearing helmets, once to his head. The defender received medical care at a nearby hospital in Rio Maria, where he died of the gunshot wounds.

Officers of the local police claimed that they would open an investigation on the case. Nonetheless, killings and attacks against human rights defenders in the area often go unpunished. In a number of recent cases, investigations have failed to take into account that such attacks may be a reprisal for the human rights work of the defenders, or even failed to pursue the intellectual authors of the crimes.

This was not the first incident faced by Carlos Cabral Pereira as a consequence of his human rights work. In January 2013, the defender denounced to the police the existence of death threats against him, in connection to an accusation of inappropriate use of trade union funds. Since 2001, the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura) and the Pará Land Pastoral Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra Pará) have recorded the existence of threats against the life of Carlos Cabral Pereira. Around the year of 1990, Carlos Cabral Pereira was attacked by an individual locally known as a hitman. The defender survived and managed to escape, with a gunshot wound to his leg.

The human rights defender was also the son in law of João Canuto, a well recognised human rights defender and the first trade unionist of Rio Maria to be killed, in 1985. The second president of the trade union in Rio Maria to be killed was Braz Oliveira, in 1990. Moreover, two brothers in law of the defender were also killed in connection to their work on the right to access to land. Up to date, the killings of João Canuto and Braz Oliveira remain unpunished .

During the past three decades, the state of Pará has been the most dangerous Brazilian state for land rights defenders. The south and southeast parts of the state were the

location of two internationally condemned massacres, Eldorado dos Carajás and Pau d'Arco, which have still not met with conclusive judicial procedures.

Front Line Defenders severely condemns the killing of Carlos Cabral Pereira, which it believes to have been motivated by his peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders remains worried for the high number of attacks and killings against human rights defenders working on land issues in Pará, and the resulting impunity.

Front Line Defenders urges authorities in Brazil to:

1. Strongly condemn the killing of Carlos Cabral Pereira, as it is believed to be directly motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of land rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Carlos Cabral Pereira, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to protect the physical and psychological integrity of the members of the Rural Workers Trade Union of Rio Maria, as well as all land rights defenders in Pará, in consultation with them;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Brazil, especially in the state of Pará, 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 Recognised 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