



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2005/NGO/236  
9 March 2005

ENGLISH ONLY

---

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixty-first session  
Item 17(b) of the provisional agenda

**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:  
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

**Written statement\* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2005]

---

\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN BRAZIL AND SYRIA

Representatives of 35 indigenous peoples in Brazil issued a manifesto in December 2004 criticizing threats against indigenous human rights defenders. The indigenous policy of the Brazilian government has been marked by a lack of appropriate responses to acts of violence against the indigenous peoples, by the denial of their constitutional rights, and by the lack of interest to establish a dialogue for defining a new indigenous policy, concluded the manifesto. Indigenous representatives accused the federal administration to contribute to an escalation of violence by allowing farmers, miners, land grabbers, woodcutters and rice farmers to organize themselves and to promote systematic invasions in the traditional lands of indigenous peoples.

Since January 2003 at least 40 indigenous human rights defenders were murdered in Brazil. Numerous land conflicts turned violent and indigenous defenders of their traditional land rights were killed by invaders. On November 23, 2004, rice farmers invaded the Indigenous Territory Raposa/Serra Do Sol in Roraima and murdered the Macuxi Indian Jocivaldo Constantino.

The indigenous human rights defender José Apoena Soares de Meirelles was assassinated on October 9, 2004, in Porto Velho in Rondonia. Meirelles was a member of a committee investigating illegal diamond mining activities in the Roosevelt Indigenous Land. The former president of the National Foundation for Indigenous People and ex-director of the Xingu National Park was trying to foster the dialogue between government institutions and the Cinta-Larga indigenous people, as well as strengthening the search for strategies to end the diamond prospecting.

The Pataxó indigenous leader Adenilson Pereira da Conceicao, who is spokesperson of the Pataxó Resistance and Struggle Front in the state of Bahia, was abducted and tortured by a police officer and a group of armed men on September 6, 2004. The indigenous leader was handcuffed, beaten and threatened for three hours before he was taken by a vehicle of the Military Police to a police station in the Prado municipality, where he was held incommunicado in a prison cell for 24 hours.

The indigenous representative Jorge Antonio of the Terena community in the state Mato Grosso do Sul has been murdered in a land conflict near the Cachoeirinha Indigenous Land. His corpse was found in an advanced state of decay on September 10, 2004.

Society for Threatened Peoples International follows with greatest concern the growing violence against indigenous human rights defenders in Brazil. We are calling the UN Commission on Human Rights to:

- urge the Government of Brazil to ensure the safety of indigenous human rights defenders, to stop invasions of indigenous territories and to end impunity for crimes against indigenous peoples and their representatives;
- encourage Brazil to develop a new indigenous policy, to strengthen efforts to demarcate indigenous lands, to respect the constitutional rights of indigenous peoples and to promote justice and peace in rural areas.

Society for Threatened Peoples International is also concerned about the on-going harassment, arrest, unfair imprisonment and prevention from travelling of human rights defenders and human

rights activists in Syria. On December 6, 2004, the trial continued before the Hama Criminal Court of Abd al-Karim Dha'oun, a trustee of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights (CDDLHR). He was arrested on September 12 in connection with a report he had written as a health inspector, on conditions inside Hama Prison. CDDLHR President, human rights lawyer Aktham Nu'aysa remains on trial before the Supreme State Security Court on charges which could carry a sentence of up to 15 years imprisonment. Kurdish human rights activists have repeatedly been imprisoned and allegedly tortured. Roughly 200 Kurds are held in Syrian prisons today for purely political reasons. They had taken part in peaceful protest marches, supported the Kurdish parties or demanded their political and civil rights.

Society for Threatened Peoples International respectfully asks the UN Commission on Human Rights to:

- condemn the on-going persecution of Kurds in Syria;
- appeal to the Government of Syria to put an end to torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment in Syrian prisons;
- urge the Government of Syria to guarantee fair trial for all prisoners especially the prisoners of conscience.

-----