



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

17 March 2003

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BRAZIL: ICJ Deplores the Assassination of Judge Antônio José Machado Dias

The Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today expressed its shock at the gang-land style assassination of Judge Antônio José Machado Dias, 48, who was shot in the chest and head by two gunmen as he drove home from a courthouse in President Prudente on 15 March. Judge Machado Dias had been responsible for overseeing the operations of the high security prisons where Brazil's top organised crime bosses are being detained.

"We deplore the murder of Judge Machado Dias," said Louise Doswald-Beck, Secretary-General of the ICJ. "It is essential that his attackers be brought to justice and that the Government of Brazil take far more effective measures to ensure respect and protection for the judiciary and the rule of law" she added.

"Brazilian authorities are investigating possible connections between the slaying of Judge Machado Dias and the recent crime wave in Rio de Janeiro by drug cartels. Police have speculated that Judge Machado Dias may have been murdered in retaliation for restricting the prison privileges of Luiz Fernando da Costa, the incarcerated leader of the feared Red Command drug cartel.

The murder of Judge Machado Dias came on the same day that Justice Minister Marcio Thomaz Bastos unveiled plans to hire 5,000 new federal police officers, of which 500 will be employed as guards in Brazil's planned federal penitentiaries. Minister Bastos had announced the previous day that extremely dangerous inmates were to be transferred to a prison in a remote area of the west Amazon.

Attacks against judges severely undermine the rule of law and the administration of justice. The CIJL/ICJ implores the Government of Brazil to bring the murderers of Judge Machado Dias to justice and to end all forms of judicial intimidation and harassment in line with international human rights standards such as the *UN Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary*.

For more information, please contact Linda Besharaty-Movaed, Legal Advisor, at 41-22-979-3800.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

81A, avenue de Châtelaine, P.O. Box 216, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41(0) 22 979 3800 – Fax: +41(0) 22 979 3801 – Website: <http://www.icj.org> - E-mail: info@icj.org