

Dr. Luís Filipe Marques Amado
President of the
Council of Ministers of the European Union

29 June 2007
Ref: B681

Dear Dr Amado,

Subject : EU – Brazil Summit, 4 July 2007

The recent promises from the European Commission on the eve of the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, to put human rights at the forefront of a strengthened co-operation with Brazil, are very welcome. In February this year, as President Lula was inaugurated for a second term, Amnesty International wrote to him stressing that as Brazil's profile grows on the world stage, so too grows the duty of the Brazilian government to play an ever more active role in the defence of human rights internationally, regionally, and perhaps most critically, at home. We are writing to you today to encourage you to use the forthcoming EU –Brazil summit as an opportunity to emphasise the importance the EU places on this responsibility, and to outline some human rights issues within Brazil that are of real and pressing concern.

In May 2007, Amnesty International published a report documenting ongoing concerns about the present public security situation in Brazil : 'From burning buses to caveiros : the search for human security'. This report was broadly welcomed by the Brazilian federal government, and a copy of it is annexed to this letter. The report details the extreme levels of criminal violence which pervade most of Brazil's major urban centres, and the endemic human rights violations committed by law-enforcement agents. Urban violence is not only costing the country tens of thousands of young lives each year - it is condemning millions of people to greater levels of poverty.

Amnesty International believes that it is essential that the federal government of Brazil takes the lead on the issue of public security, and works constructively with state governments to find long-term solutions. Genuine security cannot be achieved by defending the rights of some at the expense of others. We therefore welcomed the creation of the Sistema Unico de Segurança Pública (SUSP) as a genuine effort by the federal government to take responsibility for an issue which has long been dismissed as a state problem. However, there appears to have been a lack of political will to implement the recommendations within the SUSP, especially the use of federal funding as a lever to improve the performance of state police forces. In contravention of the principles in the SUSP, states with poor human rights records and repressive policing remain unaccountable and have continued to receive federal funds unconditionally.

It was a matter of serious concern that the federal government's initial response to the recent violence, equating organised crime with terrorism and seeking to introduce new anti-terror legislation, appeared to ignore the root causes of the problem: failures within the criminal justice system, corruption, poverty and social exclusion. Only through inclusive policies – including sanitation, health, education as well as professional, representative and accountable policing - aimed at integrating areas that have been neglected, will long-term progress be made. Amnesty International therefore welcomes the recently introduced Programa Nacional de Segurança com Cidadania which appears to take a more holistic approach to the issue of public security. We will be monitoring its effectiveness closely.

We strongly urge you to set a precedent at the EU-Brazil summit for the rest of your Presidency, of frank discussion of human rights violations with your counterparts. We would welcome any feedback that you have on this.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



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Director,
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