

Brazil

# Human rights defenders **Almir Nogueira de Amorim** and **Joao Luiz Telles Penetra** murdered

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On June 24 and 25, 2012 the bodies of human rights defenders Almir Nogueira de Amorim and Joao Luiz Telles Penetra were found after being missing since the 23rd of that month. Almir Nogueira de Amorim and Joao Luiz Telles Penetra, or "Pituca" as he was known, were both leaders of "Associacao Homens do Mar, AHOMAR" (Loosely translated as Association of the Men of the Sea), created in 2009 to defend the rights of small fishermen of Rio de Janeiro, especially those affected by the construction of Petrobras pipeline. Since the beginning of the organization's activities, there have been reports of death threats, physical attacks, and killings against its members. According to AHOMAR the master minds of these attacks are people linked to death squads, security guards hired by the companies and consortia in charge of building pipelines and militias operating in the region.

On the afternoon of June 25, 2012 the body of John Luiz Telles Penetra was found on the banks of Guanabara Bay by employees of a shipyard. The body of the [human rights] defender was found with his hands and feet bound by a rope. The previous day, around noon, the body of Almir Nogueira de Amorim had been found tied to his boat. He had marks on his neck and his boat had four holes in the hull.

Around 4:00 pm on June 22nd, Almir Nogueira de Amorim had gone to the home of his friend John Luiz Telles, on the island of Paqueta, to go fishing. It is common for fishermen to go fishing around this time and return at night, or early the next day. Since he did not return the next day as it was expected, local fishermen and firefighters began searching for them in the Bay of Guanabara.

Almir Nogueira de Amorim was a founding member of AHOMAR and an active militant of the organization. Joao Luiz Telles Penetra was the only leadership of the organization on the island of Paqueta Island and was a key element in new campaign launched by the organization. He coordinated the fight against the construction projects of Petrobras in the Guaxindiba River, located within the Environmental Protection Area of Guapimirim. This state owned oil company has plans of deepening the river to create a waterway, which would eliminate any possibility of fishing in these waters.

Almir Nogueira de Amorim and Joao Luiz Telles Penetra are not the first members of AHOMAR to be murdered. On January 19, 2010, human rights defender Marcio Amaro was killed. The militant defender was killed one day after an association rally in front of the Petrobras headquarters in the center of Rio de Janeiro, at which time, Marcio had filed a complaint about the presence of clandestine armed men on Guanabara Bay's Petrobras installations.

On May 22, 2009 the then treasurer of the association Paulo César dos Santos Souza was killed with five bullets in the face and neck before his wife and children. The crime occurred six hours after a governmental inspector decided to stop the construction of a pipeline due to irregularities. Until this moment, there are still no suspects for this crime.

The president of AHOMAR Alexander Anderson de Souza, is included in the National Programme for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders for three years. However he and his family continue to suffer many risks. We received information that at least three other leaders of AHOMAR were threatened with death in recent months. Even with the high rate of violence in the region of Maua and all the threats faced by human rights defenders, the only ostensible Policing Detachment covering the region was closed on February 13, 2012.

The Front Line Defenders believes that the murders of Almir Nogueira de Amorim and Joao Luiz Telles Penetra are directly related to their work in defense of human rights, particularly in defense of traditional fishermen in Rio de Janeiro, and is seriously concerned about the physical psychological and family members of the defenders and other members of the association.

Commit to defend the rights of human rights advocates in Brazil and around the globe.

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## The Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Brazil:

Initiate an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation of deaths of Almir Nogueira de Amorim and Luis Telles Penetra, with the intention of publicizing the results and bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

Investigate all reports of death threats and other forms of intimidation of human rights defenders and members of AHOMAR, and adopt measures to ensure their protection;

Ensure in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Brazil are able to perform their legitimate and peaceful activities of human rights without fear of reprisals and free of any restrictions.

