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Brazil: Persecution and Assassination of Rural Leaders and Activists

Brussels, 1 September 2009: The ITUC, together with its Brazilian affiliates, the CUT, CNPL, Força Sindical and the UGT, is deeply concerned about and strongly condemns the assassination of Elton Brum Da Silva, an activist in the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), and the attempted assassination of Elio Neves, general secretary of the Rural Workers' Union of São Paulo state (FERAESP), affiliated to the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

According to information received by the ITUC, the landless workers' movement activist was murdered in the Rio Grande do Sul state by an agent from the Military Brigade. According to FERAESP, the attempted assassination of Elio Neves was "an execution which fortunately failed". Neves was one of the most prominent leaders of the struggle for decent work in agriculture.

These events took place against a background of continued rural violence in Brazil, to which workers have regularly fallen victim. They are a stark reminder of the scale of the conflict over land that has been raging in the country for as long as anyone can remember, but to which no one has found a satisfactory solution.

In a letter [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/asesinato_de Eltom B da Silva e intento de asesinato Elio Neves 2.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/asesinato_de_Eltom_B_da_Silva_e_intento_de_asesinato_Elio_Neves_2.pdf) sent to the Brazilian authorities, the ITUC acknowledges the commitment of the president and his government to social justice and the respect of human rights, and asks that the necessary measures be taken as soon as possible to find those responsible for the attacks and to guarantee the respect of the fundamental rights of rural workers and the core conventions of the ILO, ratified by Brazil.

"Rural workers must have the same rights as any other workers," stated Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. "There must be an end to the extreme violence that persists in the rural areas of Brazil."

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 170 countries and territories and has 312 national affiliates.

<http://www.ituc-csi.org> <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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