

MEDIA RELEASE

Stockholm, 14 April 2016



## Crime against landless workers rampant as Brazil descends into political crisis

**The Right Livelihood Award Foundation and its 1991 Laureate MST Landless Rural Workers Movement condemn latest killings; say upholding democracy is key for Brazilian land reform.**

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation joins its 1991 Laureate, Brazil's MST Landless Rural Workers Movement, in condemning the latest killing of two of its members in the southern Brazilian state of Paraná on 7 April.

The killings took place on public land previously exploited by the Araupel lumber and wood-products company using falsified land titles. MST says police and Araupel security guards fired the shots at a group of 25 workers camped there.

Brazil has recently seen a marked increase in violence against rural workers and landless people; in 2015, at least 50 rural workers were killed across the country. According to the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), a fellow Brazilian organisation which shared the Right Livelihood Award with MST in 1991, this is the highest recorded number in 12 years and makes Brazil the most dangerous place in the world to be a social justice activist.

“The killings of landless workers have become so habitual in modern Brazil that they no longer make headlines. Current political instability seems to have coincided with a new wave of these cowardly crimes. Together with our Laureate MST, we demand justice for the victims, and safety and protection for all landless workers in Brazil,” said Ole von Uexkull, Executive Director of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation.

Brazil has one of the most inequitable systems of land distribution and ownership in the world. Two per cent of its landowners hold 60 per cent of its arable land, while nearly 100 million people are landless peasants or slum dwellers.

“Brazil needs far-reaching land reform which can only happen if its democratic institutions are functioning well,” said MST representative Ana Terra Reis, who is visiting Sweden this week for a series of public events together with Miguel Carter, editor of the book *Challenging Social Inequality: The Landless Rural Workers Movement and Agrarian Reform in Brazil*.

In response to the latest killings, MST has called for national and global mobilisation in defense of Brazil's democracy this Friday, 15 April.

**Interview opportunities: Ole von Uexkull, Ana Terra Reis and Miguel Carter** will be available for interviews. To arrange an interview, please contact: Theresa Wan Ng at +46 723 16 33 28

### Notes to Editors

**MST Landless Rural Workers Movement** received the joint Right Livelihood Award together with **Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT)** in

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1991 “...for winning land for landless families and helping them to farm it sustainably.” For more information: [www.rightlivelihood.org/mst.html](http://www.rightlivelihood.org/mst.html)

A complete report on rural conflicts in Brazil will be released by CPT this **Friday, 15 April:**

<http://www.cptnacional.org.br/index.php/publicacoes/noticias/conflitos-no-campo/3167-sugestao-de-pauta-cpt-lancara-o-relatorio-conflitos-no-campo-brasil-2015>

**17 April is the International Day of Struggle for Agrarian Reform.** This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre in Brazil, where 19 members of the landless movement were assassinated during their legitimate struggle to obtain land.

**Ana Terra Reis** has been actively engaged with the MST over the last decade, particularly by organizing landless camps and supporting the development of land reform settlements in São Paulo. She holds a PhD in Geography from the Universidade Estadual Paulista, where she wrote her thesis about public policies and resistance in land reform settlements in São Paulo. Furthermore, she has been working as a professor and administrator at the MST national training center since 2014.

**Miguel Carter** is the editor of the book *Challenging Social Inequality: The Landless Rural Workers Movement and Agrarian Reform in Brazil* as well as the founding Director of DEMOS - Centro para la Democracia, la Creatividad y la Inclusión Social, a new think tank based in Paraguay. He received his PhD in Political Science from Columbia University in New York and served as a lecturer at both the American University’s School of International Service as well as the University of Oxford’s Centre for Brazilian Studies.

### **About the Right Livelihood Award**

Since 1980, the Right Livelihood Award has been presented each year in the Swedish Parliament and is often referred to as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’. It was introduced “to honour and support those offering practical and exemplary answers to the most urgent challenges facing us today”.

There are currently 162 Right Livelihood Award Laureates from 67 countries. In addition to presenting the annual awards, the Foundation supports the work of its Laureates, particularly those who may be in danger due to the nature of their activities.

[www.rightlivelihood.org](http://www.rightlivelihood.org)

### **For more information, please contact:**

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