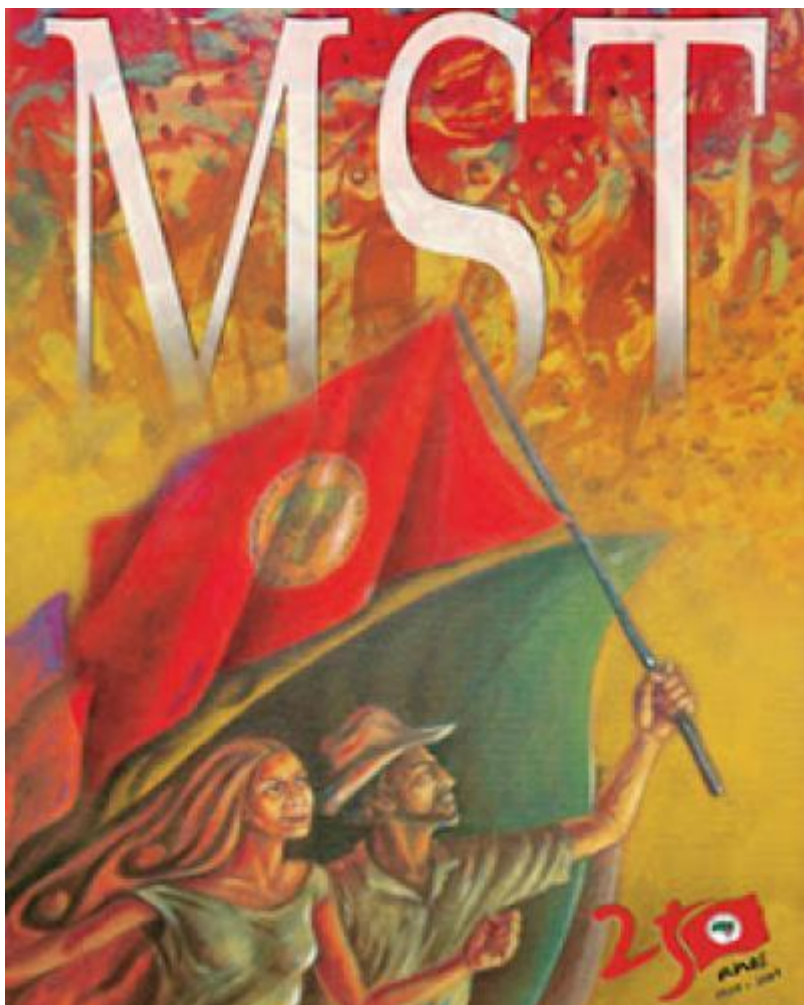


Land Rights Activist Shot Dead in Brazilian Hospital



Parauapebas, March 22 (RHC-Agencies)-- An activist with Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, MST, was killed Monday when gunmen stormed a hospital in Parauapebas in northeastern Brazil's Para state, activists said in a statement.

Five armed men burst into a small town hospital in the Brazilian Amazon, surrounded security guards and shot dead prominent land rights activist Waldomiro Costa Pereira, in the latest deadly attack on land campaigners.

The motive for Pereira's murder was unclear, the Landless Workers Movement said, but the activist had been recovering in the hospital from a previous assassination attempt.

"This is yet another murder of workers in the state of Para," the Landless Workers Movement said in a statement. "Impunity has become commonplace as has the action of criminal militia groups," the group said, adding that Pereira was a longtime activist in the "struggle for agrarian reform."

At the time of his killing, Pereira was not active with the Landless Workers Movement and was instead devoting his time to advising the local government on agriculture, the activist group said.

Conflicts over territory are common in Brazil where 1 percent of the population owns nearly half of the nation's land, according to a 2016 study from the University of Windsor in Canada.

Brazil has become one of the world's most dangerous countries for land rights activists, with 61 killed in 2016, the highest level since 2003, according to Brazil's Pastoral Land Commission.



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