

Brazilian Afro-descendant and religious leader murdered



According to Conaq and quilombola leaders, the government of Bahia did not offer protection to the residents of the quilombo. | Photo: Conaq

Brasilia, August 19 (RHC)-- The religious leader and president of a national organization of Brazilian Afro-descendants, Bernadete Pacifico, known as Mãe Bernadete, was murdered Thursday night at a local worship center, authorities reported Friday.

The information was confirmed by leaders of the National Coordination of Articulation of Quilombos (Conaq) and the Black Coalition for Rights, through an audio of Bernadette's grandson, whose veracity was authenticated by quilombola leaders.

According to the first reports, disseminated by Bernadette's profile and picked up by local media, Bernadette Pacifico was sitting on a sofa, inside the patio of the worship center, when four armed men entered and started shooting. Apparently, the motive was a land dispute involving Quilombo Pitanga dos Palmares.

In fact, two months ago, Bernadette warned that she and other leaders of Quilombo Pitanga dos Palmares were receiving death threats, which allegedly came from groups linked to real estate

speculation in Salvador.

According to Conaq and the quilombo leaders, the Bahia government did not offer protection to the quilombo residents and the threats were not investigated by public agencies.

Nevertheless, the governor of Bahia, Jerônimo Rodrigues, regretted the murder: "I received with regret and indignation the news of the death of Mãe Bernadete, a friend and great quilombola leader of Bahia. I have ordered the Military and Civil Police immediately go to the place and be firm in the investigation."

In 2017, Bernadette's son, Flavio Gabriel Pacífico dos Santos, better known as Binho do Quilombo, was also shot dead, in front of the Nova Esperança Community Center School, in Pitanga dos Palmares, two blocks from his mother's house.

Since then, the murder of Bernardete's son remains unpunished and the culprits have not been identified by the Bahian Police.

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