



Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VITALMIRO BASTOS DE MOURA SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS IN JAIL

Ipswich, MA – April 16, 2010 In Belem, Brazil, in the early morning hours of April 13, 2010, Judge Raimundo Moises Alves Flexa sentenced Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura (known as “Bida”) to 30 years in jail for being on of those ordering the murder of Sister Dorothy Stang in 2005. He had been convicted previously on May 15, 2007. He appealed the decision and a jury of seven absolved him of the murder and freed him on May 6, 2008. Then on April 7, 2009, a judge annulled the verdict of the 2008 trial and reconvicted Bida for his part in the murder. When the trial ended after midnight on Tuesday, there was a feeling of relief among the forty people of Anapu who had travelled to Belem for the trial. One less gunman would be hunting down the people in land and forest conflicts.

Sister Dorothy’s Murder

On February 12, 2005, hired gunmen murdered Sister Dorothy Stang while she was walking along a dirt road in Anapu, Para, Brazil. A native of Dayton, Ohio, Sr. Dorothy worked with the people of Brazil for almost forty years. At the time of her death, she was working with the Project for Sustainable Development (PDS), a government initiative created through Brazil's national institute for agrarian reform (INCRA). With this project, the government grants land for farms to landless families for the benefit of sustainable farming systems. The powerful ranchers who coveted this land ordered hired assassins to kill Sr. Dorothy.

Trials

A series of trials held in Brazil have followed Sr. Dorothy’s death with certain convictions. Rayfran das Neves Sales, accused of shooting Sister Dorothy, was sentenced at his third trial to 28 years in prison, with no possibility of appeal. At previous trials, two other men, Clodoaldo (Eduardo) and Amair Feijoli (Tato) had already been convicted and are currently serving sentences. Amair played the role of intermediary at the site while Clodoaldo accompanied Rayfran in the murder of Sr. Dorothy. On April 30, the court in Belem will try the case of Regivaldo Pereira Galvão (Taradão) whom prosecutors designate as a major power and money figure for the ranchers responsible for Sr. Dorothy’s death. As the sisters and people prepare for another trial, the verdict today offers hope that others like Taradão will be convicted for this murder.

Continued

According to the Brazil news service, the Prosecutor Edson Cardoso stated: "The judiciary showed that it does not succumb to the interests of the powerful." On hearing the decision of the court, the sisters and people expressed their gratitude for the efforts made for justice in this prolonged case. Friends, religious, colleagues and *companheiras* see this verdict as a major victory for the land situation in Brazil. They say always that their "hope is the last to die."

Sister Dorothy Stang was a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, an international congregation of women religious founded in France in 1804 by St. Julie Billiart. The United Nations recognized her outstanding contributions in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Sr. Dorothy received posthumously the 2008 UN Prize for Human Rights for "defending the rights of the poor, landless and indigenous populations of the Anapu region of Brazil for nearly forty years, despite numerous death threats."

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are committed to making known God's goodness through education in a variety of ministries. We serve in Belgium, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Italy, Japan, Haiti, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe, and in 34 states throughout the United States. We work to change lives by "our fundamental commitment to stand with our sisters and brothers who live in poverty and accompany them in their struggle." We staff offices/centers in Rome, ITALY, Namur, BELGIUM and Ipswich, MA, USA. We maintain a web site at: www.sndden.org.