



PRESS RELEASE

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Brazil: Investigate Journalist's Assassination in Alagoas

ARTICLE 19 strongly condemns the assassination of Walter Lessa de Oliveira, a journalist working with the Alagoas State Legislature's TV Station, and urges state authorities to investigate the case promptly and effectively, bringing to justice those responsible for the crime.

On 5 January 2008, Oliveira was shot four times in the head as he was standing at a bus stop in the periphery of Maceió, the capital of the state of Alagoas, in the northeast of Brazil. Police have told the local press that a drug trafficker may have committed the crime, given that Oliveira had supposedly filmed the drug trafficker recently. However, police also consider the possibility of a robbery resulting in his assassination. Oliveira was the former Director of the Alagoas Journalists Union.

ARTICLE 19 expresses solidarity with Oliveira's family and friends, and demands a prompt investigation of the case to punish those responsible, as well as to establish whether or not the crime was connected with the journalist's work.

In 2007, one journalist investigating organised crime was murdered in Brazil, and two were shot and wounded, possibly as a result of their work. Given the lack of appropriate national monitoring, the exact extent of violence against media workers in the country may still be underestimated. Journalists collaborating with small media outlets in the north and northeast of the country seem to face a particularly dangerous situation when reporting on issues such as corruption, illegal possession of land, and environmental crimes. In more recent years, journalists covering organised crime have also been victims of threats and attacks.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- For more information, please contact Paula Martins at paula@article19.org or +55 11 3057 0042
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression.