

Curitiba, September 3rd 2003.

His Excellency Francis Deng
The Special Rapporteur on Forced Evictions
United Nations Human Rights Centre
Palace Wilson
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
FAX: (41 22) 917 90 06

Ref: Forced eviction of 72 people by the Municipal Guard in Curitiba, state of Paraná, Brazil.

Your Excellency Mr. Francis Deng:

We write on behalf of the Terra de Direitos and the Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia, to inform Your Excellency the occurrence of a forced eviction in the city of Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil, in which several violations of human rights took place, mainly related to the evicted workers' physical integrity, among which there were ten children and six elderlies.

In September 31st 2003, the 72 homeless workers occupied an empty area owned by the Curitiba City Hall aiming to pressure the City Hall establish adequate housing policies in what concern the homeless and develop housing projects in Curitiba.

In this area, the homeless workers built canvas tents to shelter and intended to stay there until the City Hall negotiated a solution to guarantee their right to housing.

Though, in the dawn hours of September 1st , sixty strongly armed municipal guards with an illegal judicial order, they began an eviction operation. Initially, the Municipal Guard commandant and representatives of the City Hall ensured to the homeless that there would be no violence and that they would negotiate a solution to their case.

During dawn the workers stayed under strong psychological pressure, as the guards shout and threw bombs to threaten them.

At 4.00 o'clock in the morning, the homeless were informed that the guards would maintain the siege in the camp, but that there would be a meeting with the City Hall members, the aldermen and representatives of the Municipal Public Housing Company to solve the problem.

However, at 8.00 o'clock in the morning, the municipal guards invaded the homeless' camp and burnt their tents, mattresses, clothes and personal utensils in a bonfire especially made for this purpose.

The homeless tried to escape, but the guards formed a fence that obstructed their passage.

Ten guards started to attack Anselmo Schwetner, one of the homeless leaderships, who had fallen on the ground, physically. Other four workers who tried help him were also attacked: Geraldo Egídio Teixeira, Vair de Oliveira, Joel Alves da Silva and Marcos Roberto Rodrigues.

From this moment on the guards started to attack everyone, including children, women and elderly. As a result of this, a pregnant woman almost had an abortion.

Several workers were wounded and five were hospitalized, one of them with cranial traumatism.

Besides this, the guards left all the homeless families the edge of a highway without a solution for their problem.

The Curitiba Municipal Guard is not legally competent to accomplish this kind of action. In spite of the abuses that were committed, the Municipal City Hall does not intend to take any attitude to determine the responsibility for them. Because of such attitude, there has been an increase in the number of violent episodes involving the Municipal Guard in Curitiba.

For this reason, we believe that the Curitiba City Hall, while legitimating this kind of actions, should bear the responsibility for these outrages.

We would like to thank you in advance for your attention to this information and indicate our willingness to provide further information. We may be reached at 55 41 232 4660, via fax 55 41 or via e-mail at terradedireitos@terradedireitos.org.br.

Most sincerely,