

PRESS RELEASE

Brazil: Attack of Syngenta's armed militia results in deaths and wounded

Thursday 25 October 2007, by [La Via Campesina](#) (Date first published: 21 October 2007).

During an attack of an armed militia with around 40 gunmen to the peasant's camp at the experimental field trial of Syngenta Seeds multinational, at Santa Teresa do Oeste, at 13:30 of today (October 21st), a Via Campesina member, Valmir Motta, 32 years old, father of 3 children, was executed with two shots on his chest. Other six rural workers are severely wounded and a gunman was possibly killed.

The wounded: Gentil Couto Viera, Jonas Gomes de Queiroz, Domingos Barretos, Izabel Nascimento de Souza e Hudson Cardin, were taken to hospital in the region. Izabel (a woman) is in coma and on death risk.

The Syngenta's field trial was occupied this morning (21/10) for about 150 (one hundred and fifty) peasants from Via Campesina. The field trial was occupied by peasant families in March 2006, to denounce to public authorities and civil society the illegal reproduction by Syngenta of GMO soy and maize seeds on the area. The occupation turned the Syngenta's crimes known worldwide. After 16 (sixteen) months of resistance, on July 18th of this year, the 70 (seventy) families left the area, moving to a provisional settlement "Olga Benário", also at Santa Tereza do Oeste municipality.

Today, during the re-occupation of the area, the rural workers lighted fireworks and the security men that were at the company's field left the place. Around 13:30 a micro-bus stopped in front of the main entrance and a militia of about 40 gunmen heavily armed got off the bus shooting towards the peasants. The gunmen broke the front porch, executed Valmir Motta with two shots on his chest, shot other 5 peasants and beat on Isabel do Nascimento de Souza, who is at the hospital, severely wounded.

Syngenta has been hiring security services that act in irregular way on that region, articulated by the Rural Society of the West Region (Sociedade Rural da Região Oeste, SRO) and the Movement of Rural Producers (Movimento dos Produtores Rurais, MPR). One of the directors of the security services company named "NF" was arrested and the owner escaped during a Federal Police operation earlier this month, when there were apprehended ammunition and illegal guns.

There is evidence showing that the company is hired as a façade and when is time to the operations, they hire illegally more security men, forming an armed militia that works doing violent evictions and attacks to

landless peasant camps on that region. On last Thursday (18), a denounce on the armed militia's actions related to the SRO/MPR and to Syngenta on the West region was re-enforced during a public hearing, coordinated by the Human Rights and Minorities Commission of the Federal House of Deputies, held at Curitiba city.

Via Campesina demands to the Judiciary power to investigate the attack against rural workers of the camp, that, together with families at the Olga Benário settlement still struggling to turn the field trial into a Center for Agroecology and multiplication of criolla seeds to family farm and land reform.

The residents at the Olga Benário settlement, which borders with Syngenta's field trial, are also against GMO experiments in that area as it will contaminate their production of criolla seeds and will cause damages to their food, health and environment.

Via Campesina

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