



AMERICA/BRAZIL- Another defender of the Amazon rainforest has been murdered

Tucuruí (Agenzia Fides) - The farmer and activist for the defense of the Amazon, Obed Loyla Souza, 31, was killed on Thursday, June 9 in the Brazilian state of Pará (North Brazil). The news was released on June 14. The Pastoral Land Commission (PLC), which is part of the institutions of the Catholic Church, announced that Loyla Souza was killed by a blow to the head. His body was found in the city of Tucuruí, one of the main areas of illegal deforestation in the state of Para. The PLC reported that the causes of this murder are still unknown, although some suggest that the death is to be linked with discussions between Obed Loyla Souza and representatives of loggers in the region, in January and February. The PLC also sustains that the witnesses noted, the day of the murder, a black jeep with four people who were in the Esperanza camp, where the victim lived. According to news agency Brasil, Obed Souza Loyla had received death threats. It is to be noted that at the end of May, four environmentalists were killed (see Fides 06/07/2011), including three in the state of Para and the other in Rondonia.

In a note sent to Fides it says that two priests of the PLC Northeast Region 5 of the Episcopal Conference of Brazil, CNBB (Maranhão), father Inaldo Serejo (PLC Coordinator) and father Clemir Batista da Silva and 17 other members, gave birth to a hunger strike a few days ago. The protest is to draw the attention of the Minister of Human Rights of the Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, Maria do Rosario, in order to address the issue of violence against the native leaders in the state.

Mgr. Gilberto Pastana de Oliveira, Bishop of the diocese of Imperatriz, and Presiding Bishop of the region, issued a statement on that protest, claiming to reject all manifestations of the culture of death, "especially those sustained by the abuse of economic power and corruption that exists in the powers of the Federation, the state and Municipalities. "The Bishop also called on Catholics to "to get to know the facts and to contribute to legitimate farmers actions through political and social support, and with the donation of food, water, medicine and clothing for those who live in camps". (EC) (Agenzia Fides 06/16/2011)