

Time running out to recapture assassins of Chico Mendes?

The two men convicted of assassinating rubber-tapper leader Chico Mendes are still at large, and time is running out to put one of them behind bars.

A Brazilian jury convicted rancher Darly Alves da Silva and his son Darci Pereira da Silva in the 1988 murder of Mendes. Chico Mendes was leader of the rubber-tappers' union headquartered in Xapuri in the western Amazon state of Acre. He enlarged the rubber-tappers' economic struggle to include concern for labor-union organizing, the entire rainforest ecosystem, and the future of the planet.

The killing of Mendes was one of almost 1700 murders in land conflicts in rural Brazil over two decades. But the 1990 trial of his assassins marked the first time a rancher behind such a crime was convicted and sentenced to prison.

The da Silvas escaped from the prison in Rio Branco, Acre in February 1993. It was no surprise. Local citizens' groups had long predicted the escape, protesting the scandalously lax security at the jail. The killers just walked out, with the apparent complicity of the police.

A state appeals court had already overturned Darly's conviction on the grounds of insufficient evidence. That ruling is on appeal to Brazil's Supreme Court.

At the time of the escape, Darly was being held only to face trial on a previous murder warrant from Parana state. The statute of limitations on that crime runs out this year.

Brazil has a new president, and it is urgent that the new government become aware that international indignation continues over the escape of Chico Mendes' assassins. The murder of Chico Mendes and the conviction of his killers was a national public event of immense proportions in Brazil.

As a result, the escape of the murderers enormously reinforced the pattern that the rich and powerful are above the law. Such impunity for the perpetrators of violence against minorities and the poor unfortunately remains the rule. Consider also:

- the escape of the killers of union leader Expedito Ribeiro in Pará,
- the massacre of Yanomami in 1993, when marauding gold-miners brutally slaughtered scores of men, women and children,
- the 1993 slaughter of 111 inmates by military police at Carandiru prison in São Paulo.

New programs for the protection of the Amazon or high-level commitments to sustainable economic development are unlikely to have substantial effects without at least a minimal functioning judicial system.

What you can do

This situation can be changed with political will. Please fax or write Brazil's new leader to express your concern over the recapture of the assassins of Chico Mendes.

Sample letter:

*Ilmo. Exmo. Sr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso
Presidente da República
Palácio do Planalto
70150-900 Brasília DF
Brasil
fax: 011-55-61-224-0829*

Copy to:

*Ilmo. Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça
Nelson Jobin
Ministerio da Justiça
Esplanada dos Ministérios
70150-900 Brasília DF
Brasil
fax: 011-55-61-321-5145*



CHICO MENDES: His killers are still at large.

Photo: Miranda Smith/Miranda Productions, Inc.

Dear Mr. President:

Chico Mendes is a hero in Brazil and around the world. Environmental and human-rights activists are saddened and angry that his killers are escaping punishment.

The eyes of the world are on Brazil. Your nation's reputation in the community of nations may well depend on returning these assassins to the domain of law.

I respectfully encourage and urge you to use the full powers of your office to recapture the convicts Darly Alves da Silva and Darci Pereira da Silva. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Address Correction Requested

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Action Alert 108

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Rainforest Action Network works to protect the Earth's rainforests and support the rights of their inhabitants through education, grassroots organizing, and non-violent direct action

How much wood would Hollywood save if Hollywood would save wood?

Rainforest Action Network has enlisted Hollywood support to help save British Columbia's Clayoquot Sound from clearcutting. Industry heavyweights like Oliver Stone have expressed interest in helping the campaign.

RAN's full-page ads in *Daily Variety* and the West Coast edition of *The New York Times* addressed Hollywood with the headline, "Does the script call for devastated rainforest? No wonder you shoot in British Columbia." The ad explained the role Hollywood could play in helping save North America's rainforests from the cutting-room floor. It asked for Hollywood to write letters to the B.C. Film Commission expressing grave dismay over the clearcutting that is devastating pristine forests.

"The entertainment industry generates \$300 million a year in British Columbia by filming on location there, so it has a lot of clout to change B.C.'s destructive logging practices," said Tamar Hurwitz, director of RAN's Southern California field office. "We're asking producers to tell the commission they'll reconsider filming in B.C. if the clearcutting doesn't end."

Stone issued a statement to *The Hollywood Reporter* saying, "I support the Rainforest Action Network in their efforts to end clear-cutting in British Columbia. Destruction of these ancient rainforests is devastating to the environment and to our future on this planet. Clear-cutting must stop, and the rainforests must be preserved."

The Canadian press responded to RAN's ad with a flurry of articles, fueled by false claims from timber interests that RAN is "calling for a

boycott" of B.C. "We have not called for a boycott," stated Atossa Soltani, RAN wood conservation campaigner. "Someone got their facts wrong."

Meanwhile, the B.C. Forest Alliance reacted by sending a delegation to California to meet with Hollywood leaders. The Alliance is a timber-industry public-relations front formed by "Wise Use" PR giant Burson-Marsteller.

The Alliance also ran full page ads in *Daily Variety* and *The New York Times* trying to answer the RAN ad. The Alliance distorted figures of rainforest destruction and misrepresented itself as a "citizens organization." In fact, 90 percent of Forest Alliance funding comes from the timber industry.

"The Alliance is running scared," said RAN executive director Randy Hayes, as he flew to Los Angeles to meet with Alliance representatives and leaders of Hollywood's biggest environmental groups, the Environmental Media Association (EMA) and the Earth Communications Office. That meeting concluded with general agreement that delegation visits to Clayoquot Sound this summer would be the best way to see what's really going on.

Afterwards, members of the Alliance claimed in the press that Hollywood has "no interest in getting involved in B.C.

forest practices." But EMA president Andy Goodman wrote to RAN: "Nothing could be further from the truth."

Meanwhile, RAN, in coalition with Greenpeace, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Pacific Environment & Resources Center, is stepping up efforts on all fronts to save Clayoquot Sound's ancient rainforests.

A MESSAGE TO HOLLYWOOD

Does the script call for devastated rainforest?



No wonder you shoot in British Columbia.

While the major studios spent \$100 million making films in British Columbia last year, logging companies won't miss a cent if the scenic devastation B.C. is met with timber cuts.

Most of the giant spruce and cedar forests in western British Columbia are in the hands of a few giant corporations in the United States and Washington.

Now more than half the ancient rainforest of the largest intact temperate rainforest left on Earth — at Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island, British Columbia — is at risk of being knocked flat and piled up for pulp, books and newspapers.

Sixty three percent of British Columbians oppose the clearcutting. But the B.C. provincial government that was elected to stop the destruction is giving Visa, Millar-Bleed, and other timber corporations the green light — for all the usual reasons.

We believe the estimated \$1 billion the U.S. film industry generates in British Columbia each year is not worth the loss of life.

The U.S. film industry has been a leader in saving the world's rainforests by choosing the destruction-free, low-impact, and abundant use of recycled paper products in film production. Now won't you save the rainforests close to home?

Save North America's rainforest from the cutting-room floor.

Yes! I urge the British Columbia government to stop clearcutting rainforests in all the world. I will write to the B.C. Film Commission, the U.S. Film Industry, and North American trade organizations to urge them to stop the clearcutting of rainforests in all provinces.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Send to: Rainforest Action Network, 450 Sansome Street, Suite 700, San Francisco, CA 94111

Ad: Public Media Center, photos: T-Garth Lenz, B-Scotney Hill

RAN's Hollywood-campaign advertisement ran in *Daily Variety* and *The New York Times*.