

## Trial of Gunmen Accused of Murdering US Nun Starts in Brazil

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The trial of two of the five hired gunmen and mentors in the murder of the American nun, Dorothy Stang, begins today in the city of Belém, capital of the state of Pará, in northern Brazil.

The opening session will be attended by the head of the Special Secretariat of Human Rights, minister Mário Mamede, and the special UN representative for Human Rights Defense, Hina Jilani.

Stang was a social activist and environmentalist who worked many years in small rural communities in the area of Anapu, Pará, helping the poor in their struggle to obtain land rights and create sustainable development projects that did not destroy natural resources. She died in February from six gunshot wounds.

At the end of September, in a trip to Brazil, David Stang, brother of Stang, said that he was confused because he thought the investigation into his sister's death had been completed. But at a meeting with the ministers of Justice, Márcio Thomaz Bastos, and Agrarian Development, Miguel Rossetto, he was informed that the investigation was going on.

"We were in Belém (capital of the state of Pará) to see what the authorities had done. They did not give us any assistance, but we thought the investigation had been completed. Now we are in Brasília and the ministers pat us on the back and assure us that justice will be done," he said.

A family lawyer, Brent Rushforth, says that it seems there are at least three more landowners who may have been involved in the Dorothy Stang crime.

"The world is waiting to see if there is justice in Pará," he declared, adding that over the last 33 years a total of 772 rural workers have been killed in the region around Anapu, Pará, but only three landowners were ever actually charged with murder.

Two of them have disappeared and the other one, the only one to go on trial, is serving a house arrest sentence in his comfortable home in Goiânia, capital of the state of Goiás.

Dorothy Stang, an American nun from Ohio who had lived in Brazil for over 30 years, was a prominent activist in the Amazon region.

She participated in the struggle for sustainable development in the Amazon rainforest, denouncing illegal lumbering operations, fraudulent land deals and violence against the poor rural workers. Up to now five men have been arrested for her murder. They are in jail in Belém. ABr