

## Killer of American Nun in Brazilian Amazon Gets 30 Years in Jail

Contributed by José Wilson Miranda  
Wednesday, 16 May 2007

Brazilian farmer Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura, "Bida", was sentenced to 30 years in jail for the death of American missionary and Amazon forest defender Dorothy Stang, in Anapu, state of Pará, in Brazil's Amazon region. The jurors concluded by 5 votes to two that he was guilty of the crime.

The jury determined that the farmer was the crime's mastermind and a judge sentenced Moura to 30 years in prison, but the farmer still can appeal that verdict.

The sentence is for 30 years of jail time for doubly qualified murder, with the aggravating factor that the victim was an old person. Moura will not be able to appeal his sentence in freedom, as his defense asked the judge. The "killing was carried out in violent and cowardly manner," Judge Raymond Moisés Alves Flexa stated.

The verdict's announcement was noisily celebrated by about 900 farm workers who stayed in front of the court building during the two days in which the jury heard testimony before taking its decision.

The jurors had started their deliberations on Monday, May 14. On Tuesday, May 15, the prosecutor Edson Cardoso made his case once again being followed by the arguments of lawyers Américo Leal and Eduardo Imbiriba, who worked for the defense.

The missionary, who became a Brazilian citizen, worked for 30 years in small communities of the Amazon defending the right of small ranchers to have a piece of land. She was also a strong advocate of the forest's sustainable exploration.

Both gunmen who killed her, Rayfran das Neves Sales and Clodoaldo Carlos Batista, and the man who hired them, Amair Feijoli da Cunha, have already been tried, convicted and are in jail.

Reginaldo Pereira Galvão, another farmer, who is charged with being another mastermind of the crime, is waiting for his trial in freedom.

At first, on Monday, Moura, denied any involvement in the case and even said that he did not know the American missionary. His testimony was backed up by Sales, one of the men charged with having shot the nun and who was sentenced to 27 years in prison.

The new version presented by Neves declaring the farmer innocent was quite different from 12 other testimonies he had given previously incriminating Moura.

Dorothy's brother, David Stang, said he was indignant at the recanted testimony: "I felt that my sister was murdered once again here. They attempted to hurt her moral of, to kill her image. I am angry and sad because of this. I didn't expect them to use this kind of strategy, but I still trust justice will be done in this land," he said on Monday.

After the verdict was read, David wept. "Justice was done," he told reporters. He added that he now believes that another farmer also accused of ordering the killing, Pereira Galvão, might also be convicted later in the year when he goes to trial.

Dorothy Stang was shot to death in February 2005. According to prosecuting office, the missionary was murdered because she defended the creation of settlements for rural workers in public lands, which were claimed by farmers and lumbermen in the region.