

Brazilian UN Envoy Killed in Iraq Gets a Bronze Bust in Geneva

Contributed by Newsroom
Thursday, 28 June 2007

Sérgio Vieira de Mello, a Brazilian ambassador to the UN who was killed four years ago during a terrorist attack while on assignment in Iraq, was honored this Thursday, June 28, by the United Nations with the unveiling in Geneva of a bronze likeness of the 30-year Brazilian veteran of many UN peacekeeping operations .

On August 19, 2003, Vieira de Mello - who was serving as the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Iraq at the time - and 21 other colleagues lost their lives when UN headquarters in the country was bombed.

The bust, which is a gift from Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and created by world-famous Georgian artist and philanthropist Zurab Tseretelli, rests upon a base which carries the names of Vieira de Mello's colleagues who lost their lives in the attack.

Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan presided over the ceremony, which was also attended by Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, survivors of the bombing, family members of victims, representatives from the UN as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and diplomats.

Swiss authorities supplied the landscaping of the memorial in the grounds in front of the Palais Wilson.

Vieira de Mello also served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, a post to which he was appointed in 2002. Prior to that, he was the UN Transitional Administrator in East Timor after having briefly held the position of Special Representative for Kosovo.

He had extensive headquarters and field experience in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, including in Bangladesh, Sudan, Cyprus, Mozambique, Peru and Lebanon.

"Those who killed him have committed a crime, not only against the United Nations but against Iraq itself," Mr. Annan said shortly after Vieira de Mello's death.

"The death of any colleague is hard to bear, but I can think of no one we could less afford to spare, or who would be more acutely missed throughout the UN system, than Sergio," said the then-Secretary-General.

"Throughout his career he has been an outstanding servant of humanity, dedicated to relieving the suffering of his fellow men and women, helping them to resolve their conflicts and rebuild their war-torn societies."