June 16, 2005  
Sr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Presidente  
República Federativa do Brasil  
Palácio Alvorada  
Brasília, DF  
BRASIL  
pr@planalto.gov.br  

Dear Mr. President,

I write on behalf of the American Anthropological Association, a professional association of more than 12,000 members from the United States and elsewhere, with respect to an urgent situation related to death threats against our archaeologist colleague, Dr. Niede Guidon, Director of the World Heritage site of Parque Nacional Serra de Capivara, Piauí. Dr. Guidon and her staff are responsible for the park’s maintenance, including prevention of illegal incursions for resource extraction and hunting.

We urge the Brazilian federal government to investigate the alleged threats and to take immediate action to protect Dr. Guidon and members of her staff, in addition to protecting this site of inestimable importance to both the Brazilian and world heritage.

The Parque Nacional Serra de Capivara was created in 1979 and established as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1991. One of the best known archaeological regions in Latin America, it currently provides the oldest credible evidence of human occupation in the Americas, among the oldest recognized rock art in the world, and an unbroken sequence of human occupation since the late “Ice Age” (Pleistocene geological epoch) at more than 300 identified sites.

The findings of Dr. Niede Guidon and her team, published in many prestigious international scientific journals, are controversial, as is unavoidable given their great significance for understanding human heritage. The controversy makes the critical importance of the preservation of this area all the more urgent, since all interested researchers agree that the site is of inestimable importance.

Particularly disturbing are threats against the life of Dr. Guidon the principal individual in efforts to research and protect the area since the 1970s, and some of her colleagues. A highly respected scientist internationally and one of the most prominent archaeologists in Latin America, Dr. Guidon has been tireless in her efforts to protect this unique archaeological region. Her efforts to bring the findings from Piauí and Brazilian archaeology to an international audience, together with her work to protect this remarkable region, make Dr. Guidon an important asset of the Brazilian patrimony.

Dr. Guidon has astutely recognized the truly unique character of the region of Serra de Capivara in terms of its unparalleled record of human occupation and its unique ecology and physical beauty. The National Park preserves some of the last intact caatinga vegetation not destroyed by recent occupation and development in this part of the Brazilian Northeast, as well as the breathtaking natural landscape of northeastern Brazil, including the spectacular rock formations of the region. The recent incursions and threats to the legal stewards of Serra de Capivara threaten its rare archaeological and ecological resources and impede movement of local fauna between the Serra da Capivara and the Serra das Confusões National Parks.

We urge the Brazilian government to provide assistance to the area and those who work legally to protect the park. Following the recent assassinations of Sister Dorothy Strang and Dionisio Julio Ribeiro...
Filho, it is clear that death threats made against Dr. Guidon and other caretakers of Serra de Capivara must be taken seriously. We feel strongly that if Brazilian authorities intervene in this case, such tragic events can be avoided and this critical region of human and ecological heritage preserved for future generations.

We would appreciate receiving prompt reply indicating actions the government is taking in this case. Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Brumfiel, PhD Laura R. Graham
President Chair, Committee for Human Rights
Cc:
Mr. Francesco Bandarin, Director
The World Heritage Centre - UNESCO
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP, France
fax : 33-1-45 68 55 70

Mr. Marcio Thomaz Bastos
Minister of Justice
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco T, Ed. Sede
70064-900 Brasília – DF
Brazil
Fax: 55-61-224-4784

Ms. Marina da Silva
Minister of Environment
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco B, do 5º ao 9º andar
CEP 70068-900
Brasília - Distrito Federal
Brazil
marina.silva@mma.gov.br

Mr. Gilberto Gil
Minister of Culture - MinC
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco B, 3º andar
CEP 70068-900
Brasília - Distrito Federal
Brazil
gm@minc.gov.br

Mr. Eduardo Campos
Minister of Science and Technology
Esplanada dos Ministérios - Bloco E
CEP 70068-900
Brasília - Distrito Federal
Brazil
Mr. Wellington Dias  
Governor of Piauí  
governador@pi.gov.br

Mr. Nilmário Miranda  
Special Secretary for Human Rights  
Ministério da Justiça - Edifício Sede  
Esplanada dos Ministérios - Bloco T - Sala 420  
70064-900 - Brasília – DF  
Brazil

Mr. Roberto Abdenur  
Ambassador to the United States  
3006 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20008-3699  
ambassador@brasilemb.org

Professora Miriam Pillar Grossi  
President  
Associação Brasileira de Antropologia  
Cx Postal 5155  
88.040-970 Florianópolis, SC  
Brazil  
aba@abant.org.br

Hon. Roger F. Noriega  
Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs  
U.S. Department of State,  
Harry S. Truman Building, 2201 C Street, NW, Suite 4527A  
Washington, DC 20521

Hon. Senator Norm Coleman  
Chair -- Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Narcotics Affairs  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
450 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Senator Christopher J. Dodd  
Ranking Member -- Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Narcotics Affairs  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
450 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Rep. Dan Burton  
Chair -- House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere  
House Committee on International Relations  
259A Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Rep. Robert Menendez
Ranking Member -- House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
House Committee on International Relations
259A Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515