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Rancher convicted for nun's murder released

by Lise Alves by Catholic News Service

SAO PAULO -- The Brazilian bishops' Pastoral Land Commission condemned the release of rancher Regivaldo Galvao pending an appeal of his 30-year sentence for his involvement in the 2005 assassination of U.S.-born Sister Dorothy Stang.

The commission, known by its Portuguese acronym as the CPT, said Galvao's May 19 release on his own recognizance "strengthens impunity, which in turn generates increasing violence."

"Those who have financial resources are always able to benefit from the law, while the poor remain years in jail awaiting trial," the CPT statement said.

A commission report said that, in the past 25 years, more than 1,540 peasants and their allies have been assassinated. In all of these cases, only 88 people went to trial, including 20 accused of ordering the killings. Of these 20, only 2 have been found guilty and sent to jail: Galvao, who was released, and Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura, the other rancher accused of plotting Sister Dorothy's assassination.

Sister Dorothy, 73, was a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and a naturalized Brazilian citizen. She was known for her fight against large landowners in the Amazon region.

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