

19 March 2021

Brazil: LGBTIQ+ rights organization CasaNem broken into

On 15 March 2021 at around 10 pm, the premises of **CasaNem**, a community centre and shelter for LGBTIQ+ persons living in vulnerable economic and social conditions in Rio de Janeiro, was broken into. The individuals who broke into the premises are reported to be the family members of one of the centre's residents, and issued death threats against the residents during the incident.

[CasaNem](#) was founded in 2016 as a preparatory centre for university entrance exams for transgender and gender non-conforming persons. It currently houses around 30 trans people and supports over 80 others, through the provision of courses, workshops, discussions, festivals and a community kitchen. In August 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, an ownership repossession left the centre's residents homeless and in September 2020, CasaNem was provided with a permanent house by the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro. This has allowed the organization to shelter trans people who have been evicted from their homes or are living in vulnerable conditions without housing, food and or employment.

On 15 March 2021, the father, mother and sister of one of the individuals hosted by CasaNem broke into the residence. The individual in question had been assaulted by her family since she was 14 years-old, and has been hosted by CasaNem since January 2021, when she turned 18. The family members physically reportedly assaulted the person and tried to take her by force. When they were stopped by the residents of CasaNem, the father threatened the residents, reportedly saying that he would return with armed friends to "fill people with bullets".

The military police were called to the CasaNem residence to address the break-in, however once they arrived they refused to intervene to contain the situation. Following this, members of CasaNem went to the police station to report the incident, and the military police officers who had gone to the residence were called to give explanations for their inaction. The break-in was registered by the police, and an investigation into the incident is yet to be opened.

Since CasaNem relocated to its current location in September 2020, it has been experiencing acts of intimidation from unknown individuals. On 21 February 2021, paint was poured into the engine of the vehicle used by the organisation, with the intention that the engine would explode when it was started. Fortunately, the volunteer driver noticed the malfunction and took the car to a mechanic before the intended explosion could occur.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the break-in of CasaNem and the threats its residents and directors were subjected to, and is concerned for the physical and psychological integrity of CasaNem members and residents following the incident. It believes that the break-in, threats and other acts of intimidation are connected to their work in defence of human rights and LGBTIQ+ rights, and sees these attacks as part of a broader pattern of harassment against the transgender population. These attacks and harassment come at a time when this group is acutely vulnerable to the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and are further concerning given that Brazil reportedly has the highest number of killings of trans people in the

world. In the year 2020 alone, a reported 175 transgender and gender non-conforming persons were killed¹.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Brazil to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of CasaNem members;
2. Investigate reports of physical attacks, death threats and other forms of intimidation against the human rights defenders and members of CasaNem, and adopt immediate measures to ensure their protection, considering in particular the situation of vulnerability that the trans population is exposed;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Brazil, especially the LGBTIQ+ population, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

1 Dossiê Assassinatos e Violência contra Travestis e Transsexuais Brasileiras em 2020 [Report on Murders and Violence against Brazilian Transvestites and Transsexuals in 2020] published by the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (ANTRA). Available in Portuguese at: <https://antrabrasil.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/dossie-trans-2021-29jan2021.pdf>