

## HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

1630 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20009  
Tel: 202-612-4321  
Fax: 202-612-4333  
Email: hrwdc@hrw.org

### Americas Division

José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director  
Daniel Wilkinson, Deputy Director  
Tamara Taraciuk, Researcher  
Nik Steinberg, Researcher  
Max Schoening, Researcher  
Stephanie Morin, Researcher  
Laura Graham, Associate  
Guillermo Farias, Associate

### Advisory Committee

Lloyd Axworthy, Chair  
Marina Pinto Kaufman, Vice Chair  
Julien Studley, Vice Chair  
Roberto Alvarez  
Cynthia Armon  
Carlos Basombrio  
Peter D. Bell  
Marcelo Bronstein  
Paul Chevigny  
John Dinges  
Denise Dresser  
Tom J. Farer  
Myles Frechette  
Alejandro Garro  
Peter Hakim  
Ronald G. Hellman  
Stephen L. Kass  
Andy Kaufman  
Susanna Leval  
Kenneth Maxwell  
Jocelyn McCalla  
Robert Pastor  
Bruce Rabb  
Michael Shifter  
George Soros  
Rose Styron  
Javier Timerman  
Horacio Verbitsky  
George Vickers  
Alex Wilde

### Human Rights Watch

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director  
Michele Alexander, Development & Outreach Director  
Carroll Bogert, Associate Director  
Emma Daly, Communications Director  
Barbara Guglielmo, Finance & Administration Director  
Peggy Hicks, Global Advocacy Director  
Iain Levine, Program Director  
Dinah Pokempner, General Counsel  
James Ross, Legal & Policy Director  
Joe Saunders, Deputy Program Director  
Jane Olson, Chair, Board of Directors

Washington D.C., May 16, 2012

Dilma Rousseff  
President of the Federative Republic of Brazil  
Brasília – DF

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

Dear President Rousseff,

I am writing to express our support for the establishment of a truth commission to clarify the facts surrounding human rights violations committed from 1946 to 1988 in Brazil. We are very encouraged by the leadership that you have shown in making this possible, including your recent appointment of a group of distinguished and knowledgeable individuals to serve as commissioners. We believe that it is very important now that your administration do everything possible to ensure that the truth commission has the resources and support it needs to succeed in its historic mission.

The creation of a truth commission offers an opportunity for Brazil to shed light on thousands of cases of grave human rights abuses, including nearly 500 cases of forced disappearances and deaths committed during the years of military rule (1964-1985). Not only the victims and their families, but Brazilian society as a whole, stand to benefit from a thorough and fair examination of serious human rights violations committed during that era.

Seeking the truth about past abuses is not a matter of political vengeance or witch hunting. Brazil has a binding obligation under international law to investigate, prosecute, and punish those individuals who share responsibility for serious violations of human rights. While truth commissions and other extrajudicial mechanisms can never substitute criminal investigations and prosecutions of atrocities, they have the potential to be valuable complementary tools for preserving historical memory, clarifying events, and attributing political and institutional responsibilities. We hope that Brazil's truth commission will be followed by serious efforts towards full accountability for past atrocities.

The success of the truth commission will depend, in large measure, on whether the commissioners receive the resources and support they need to conduct independent and thorough investigations. It is particularly important that they have ample access to any government documents that may be relevant to the cases under investigation, and that they receive the full and active cooperation of all state institutions, including the armed forces.

Again, we commend you for the important role that you have played in the creation of the truth commission. We are confident that, with the continued support of your administration, the commission will be able to make a major contribution to strengthening a culture of respect for human rights in Brazil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JM Vivanco', with a horizontal line underneath.

José Miguel Vivanco  
Human Rights Watch

CC: Minister Maria do Rosário Nunes, Ministry of Human Rights

CC: Minister José Eduardo Cardozo, Ministry of Justice

CC: Minister Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Ministry of Foreign Relations