

## Brazil Police Vow to Punish Officer Who Destroyed TV Reporter Equipment

Contributed by Newsroom  
Sunday, 16 November 2008

In Brazil, after a month-long investigative effort, the Bahia State Military Police have confirmed the aggression perpetrated by Lieutenant Marcelo Moura against a Bahian television team, at the beginning or last month.

According to a source from the police's Social Communication Department, Moura, who was suspended after the incident, is waiting for his punishment to be decided by a military court of law.

"Administrative punishments can go as far as to the firing of a public servant," stated Deveraldo de Carvalho Melo, head of the Social Communication Department and also a magistrate.

The incident occurred during the first day for casting ballots in the municipal elections, on October 5, 2008. A newswoman and a cameraman working for TV Educativa (TVE), a subsidiary of the Bahia State Culture Department, were reporting on the voting in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Bahia State's capital city, Salvador.

When they heard a noise that sounded like a gunshot, they drove their television station vehicle to the place the noise seemed to be coming from.

According to TVE Newscasts Supervisor Cíntia Campos, the cameraman filmed a group of policemen attacking voters who supposedly were campaigning, which is forbidden during the voting. When Lieutenant Moura noticed the confrontation was being recorded, he demanded that the tape be destroyed.

While the cameraman was trying to talk the matter over with him, the lieutenant threw his equipment on the pavement and shot six bullets into the camera.

The cameraman filed a complaint with the Fifth Precinct of the Salvador Civilian Police.

The Military Police Social Communication Department issued a public statement about the incident, stating that the Military Police "abhor and rebuff the perpetration of any act involving despotism against press professionals in their line of work, especially when performed upon them by those who have the institutional duty of law enforcement."

Photojournalist Arrested

Brazilian Police Commissioner Ademir Braz de Souza ordered, on November 10, the arrest of Paulo Schmidt, a photographer for Cidade AM radio station, when he was taking pictures of a car accident in the city of Brusque, Santa Catarina state, southern Brazil.

According to Schmidt, the commissioner struck his equipment, claiming that he was not allowed to photograph the victims. When Schmidt continued working, Braz de Souza issued an order for his arrest. Schmidt was taken to the local police station by a group of police officers. He was released one hour later.

Braz de Souza said the photographer was detained because one of the victims of the accident, an official in the local police station, had requested that no pictures be taken and Schmidt had disregarded this request.

Schmidt was arrested for showing contempt towards an authority. The photographer said the victim was in no condition to request anything as she was hurt and was receiving medical attention.

Schmidt filed an abuse of authority complaint at the local police station.