

## Brazilian Newspaper Fined US\$ 17,000 for Letter "Damaging Honor" of Judge

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In Southern Brazil, this past December 5, the State of Rio Grande do Sul's Court of Justice, in the city of Caxias do Sul, ratified a sentence against the "Pioneiro" newspaper and businessman Airton Zanandrea.

Zanandrea and the publication were charged for having "damaged the honor" of Judge Sérgio Fusquine Gonçalves by publishing, in November 2007, a letter in which Zanandrea criticized the judge.

The newspaper and Zanandrea, were sentenced on September 26 and together will have to pay indemnities of 40,000 Brazilian reais (approximately US\$ 17,000). The fine was reduced from the initial 50,000 established by the lower court.

Zanandrea criticized the judge in his letter, after the newspaper published a report about the excessive number of prisoners in the local jail and alleged that the judge arbitrarily granted parole to a man accused of theft.

He also criticized the criminals, the judge and the state for not solving the problems in the prisons.

The businessman wrote: "I don't know who is more irresponsible, the thief who stole, the judge who let him go free or the government that can't solve the problem of overcrowding. They seem to be flour of the same bag (meaning, they are all the same).

Zanandrea said that he sent the letter to the newspaper's editor, but did not authorize the paper to publish it.

The newspaper will have to pay 62.5% of the indemnities and the businessman will pay the difference.