

Rural Workers Invade Bank of Brazil to Make Their Case

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On the morning of March 11, dozens of farmers involved in the social movements of the Via Campesina marched in Erechim, in the northern part of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in southern Brazil. After a meeting, they decided to occupy a branch of the Banco do Brasil (the state-owned Brazilian bank) in the center of the city that afternoon.

With the occupation, the rural workers put pressure on the federal and state governments to act on the demands they had presented during a protest just days before.

The acts, they explained, occurred in order to bring the attention of the government and of society as a whole to the situation of neglect that farmers experience, the same farmers who, among other problems, year after year, are suffering from a drought.

Among the demands are: amnesty in the payment in the seeds swap program, re-ordering of debt according to the real conditions of payment for small farmers, readjusting of farm insurance, Proagro; intervention of the State in the regulation of food prices, stock and selling of rural farm products.

The protesters remained for two hours inside the bank until the Special Operations Battalion (BOE - Batalhão de Operações Especiais) emptied the branch in an action ordered by the Military Police of the State Government.

According to the activists, around 60 people from the countryside were abused, searched, identified and taken by the city police to make statements. Seven people were accused and held in a private jail.