

Brazilian Firms to Stop Buying Goods Involving Slave Labor

Contributed by Keite Camacho
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Brazil's Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor, announced yesterday, has already gathered 60 signatures, among them of companies such as Petrobras, and supermarket chains Carrefour, and Pão de Açúcar.

The idea of the government, entrepreneurs, and civil society is to make the work of those who take economic advantage of the situation impracticable. Companies will stop buying products from and banks will stop financing activities that keep workers in conditions that resemble slavery.

For the Minister of Labor, Ricardo Berzoini, the Pact represents the commitment of many countries with the eradication of slave labor through the mapping of the productive chain.

"What is fundamental for us is that companies that are in the end of the chain, that many times consume products without exactly understanding their production process, can commit to mapping the productive chain and verify if it includes any slave labor," he said.

According to Patrícia Audi, coordinator of the project for slave labor combating of the International Labor Organization (ILO), Brazil's official data acknowledges that 25 thousand people are under slave conditions in the country.

"It is not embarrassing to recognize the existence of the problem; it would be embarrassing not to do anything to combat it. Brazil is at the vanguard not only by recognizing the problem, but also by repressing it, and by creating a 'dirty list'. These initiatives show that State and society are worried with the issue," he affirmed.

ILO's data show that 1.3 million people are under slave labor condition in Latin America and the Caribbean. "This happens worldwide. The estimate is that 12.3 million people are under similar conditions," said Audi.

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