

In Brazil, Violence Against Elderly Is Overlooked

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Brazil's federal government is getting ready to launch the National Plan to Confront Violence against the Elderly, to combat violence and mistreatment of older people, as well as guaranteeing the rights of people who are 60 years old or more.

The proposal envisions joint, short-, medium-, and long-term actions involving the Special Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH), and the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Security, Justice, Social Development, and Hunger Alleviation, among others.

The Plan is coordinated by the SEDH and is in the final stages of preparation. According to the Deputy Secretary for Human Rights, Mário Mamede, the launching date is still being set.

Mamede reveals that one of the objectives is to instill a culture of respect for the elderly in the country.

He points out that the lack of assistance for the elderly and their abandonment in hospitals or retirement homes are examples of the violence practiced against this segment of the population.

"The elderly person, frequently, is tolerated by the family, when he or she receives a pension or retirement benefits that help to sustain the family.

"But it is often the case that, when he or she has no resources to offer, the elderly person is neither tolerated, nor desired, nor loved, nor welcomed.

"So, the first question is to get off the plane of hypocritically believing that Brazil's elderly population is not the target of violence," he emphasizes.

The proposals, with an operational timetable and attribution of tasks to the different institutions, are divided into four major areas: transformation of the elderly into actors; specific promotional and preventive steps to confront violence and mistreatment; improvement in the network of care and attention for the elderly; and specific actions to combat impunity.

In each of these areas, there are proposals for measures to be developed both by government agencies and with the involvement of all of civil society.

The proposed activities include campaigns to make society more responsive and the development of study and research programs in this area, to elaborate indicators and parameters that will serve other initiatives to confront violence.

The strategy for this is to create a data bank on the situation of the elderly in the country.

Another aspect of the plan has to do with the establishment of support services on the state and municipal level to handle cases of abuse and mistreatment of people over 60.

According to the Statute for the Elderly, in effect since January 1 of this year, the penalty for crimes against the elderly varies from six months to twelve years of prison, plus a fine.

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