

Brazil's Referendum on Gun Sales May Never Happen

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The publication of a Unesco study of deaths in Brazil by firearms has ratcheted up the pressure on the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies to vote authorization for a referendum on the sale of firearms and ammunition.

Congress has already passed a bill prohibiting the sale of firearms and ammunition in Brazil. Voting in the chamber is presently tied up because of other measures that have priority such as temporary measures (MPs) and bills earmarked "constitutional urgency".

The problem is that in order for the referendum to take place this year, the authorization has to be approved by the end of this month.

The president of the Senate, who authored the authorization bill, Renan Calheiros (PMDB-AL), says he will do everything he can to bring it to a vote, including removing the "constitutional urgency" measures from the agenda.

The chief justice of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), Carlos Velloso, says that if the legislature approves the referendum by the end of June the most probable date for the public consultation will be October 23.

The referendum will consist of one question, which in the original bill was: "Should the sale of firearms and ammunition be prohibited in Brazil?"

This is the first time in Brazilian history that the population is being called on to vote on a measure already approved by the legislature.

Meanwhile, the country's National Disarmament Campaign continues. So far the number of firearms collected is twice what was expected. In just over a year, the campaign has collected 364,000 firearms throughout the country.

Because the campaign has been so successful, the government has now extended it until October 23, when it hopes the referendum will take place.

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