

Slave Labor Is Not Worse, Just More Visible, Says Brazil

Contributed by Ivan Richard
Friday, 01 July 2005

At a hearing on slave labor this week in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, Ruth Vilela, from Brazil's Ministry of Labor, reported that since the creation of the Mobile Inspection Groups in 1995 by the ministry, the problem has become more visible because more is being done to deal with it.

As for eliminating slave labor in Brazil, Vilela declared: "If employers complied at least with basic legislation and treated their employees with a minimum of dignity, we would not have a slave labor problem."

Since they became operational, the Mobile Inspection Groups have liberated some 15,000 workers from slave-type labor situations and fined employers US\$ 7.2 million (17 million reais).

Also testifying at the hearings, José Pandelot, president of the association of labor judges (Associação Nacional dos Magistrados da Justiça do Trabalho) (Anamatra), declared that "The only way to stop slave labor is to make it impossible for landowners to commercialize their produce when slave labor is used."

In May, a Pact to Eradicate Slave Labor was signed in Brazil by representatives of the government, the business community and civil society. The objective of the pact is make the use of slave labor economically inviable.

The pact was based on studies by the International Labor Organization and the ONG, Reporter Brasil, which showed how slave labor had become a part of the productive chain in Brazil.

ABr - www.radiobras.gov.br