

Brazil to Boost Protection to Children Threatened with Death

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By the end of 2006, Brazil's Secretariat of Human Rights' Special Protection Program for Children and Adolescents Threatened with Death plans to take care of 600 children and young people in six Brazilian states.

The project is already operating in three states (Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Espírito Santo), looking after 150 victims. The plan is for the program also to take effect in the states of São Paulo, Pernambuco, and Bahia.

According to Paulo Marques, the undersecretary responsible for the Promotion of Children's and Adolescents' Human Rights in the Secretariat of Human Rights, the program is aimed at protecting not only the youngsters but their families.

He said that there are various causes of death threats to children and adolescents in Brazil. "Drug traffic continues to be the biggest reason, but sexual exploration networks continue to grow, and there are also territorial fights among gangs," Marques observed.

The program provides immediate protection to victims, once death threats have been confirmed. Victims are placed in temporary safe houses, after which they are transferred to more secure havens, such as a family residence or an institution.

The program is still working on an experimental basis. The bill to legalize the process is under consideration in the National Congress and may still come up for a vote this year.

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