

Brazil to Spend US\$ 88 Million on Referendum on Firearms

Contributed by Gabriela Guerreiro
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The Parliamentary Front for a Brazil without Firearms officially launches its campaign, today, in Campinas, in the interior of São Paulo state, in favor of prohibiting firearms sales in the country.

The secretary-general of the Front, Federal Deputy Raul Jungmann, said that the first major event organized by the Deputies and Senators will be a show and rally, gathering actors, intellectuals, and politicians who support the disarmament proposal, on August 11 in Rio de Janeiro.

They are all in favor of a "yes" vote in the October 23 referendum, when voters will be asked to respond to the question: "Should firearm and ammunition sales be prohibited in Brazil?"

The members of the Parliamentary Front want to explain to the Brazilian people that firearms sales constitute one of the elements that contribute directly to the growth of violence in the country.

"We shall extend the debate beyond the question of arms sales. In order to understand why firearm and ammunition sales should be prohibited, the discussion must include the questions of the police forces, the judicial system, and the prison system," Jungmann pointed out.

The Deputy recalled that Brazil holds the world record in homicides resulting from firearm use and has 18 million firearms scattered throughout the country. Half of these weapons are illegal or irregular.

"To emerge from this situation in which we are entrapped, we must take a stand the way we did in the past in the Direct Elections Now movement. This can only be done through a campaign of civic education, and the referendum offers precisely this chance," Jungmann affirmed.

The secretary of the Parliamentary Front announced that committees will be set up all over the country to defend the end of firearm sales.

The "Brazil without Firearms" group also plans to produce educational booklets and establish a toll-free 0800 number to clarify doubts people may have about the referendum and the campaign.

Jungmann confessed, however, that the resources available for the pro-disarmament campaign will be limited.

"We shall be engaged in a bare bones campaign. We plan to hold shows to raise funds at rallies and appeal to the public for donations. Even with little money, we will be able to use the radio and television to present our proposals," he said.

The Deputy was unable to estimate the amount necessary to cover the costs of the campaign.

The TSE (Federal Elections Board) figures it will spend US\$ 88 million (210 million reais) on the referendum, including expenses for voter reregistration in various Brazilian states.

"Just on gunshot wound victims, the National Health System spends R\$ 180 million per year, which is practically all we shall spend on the referendum," Jungmann affirmed.

The Parliamentary Front for a Brazil without Firearms is presided by Senator Renan Calheiros (PMDB-Alagoas) and composed of the following lawmakers: Luiz Otávio (PMDB-Pará), Gerson Camata (PMDB-Espírito Santo), César

Borges (PFL-Bahia), Demóstenes Torres (PFL-Goiás), Tasso Jereissati (PSDB-Ceará), Arthur Virgílio (PSDB-Amazonas), Aloizio Mercadante (PT-São Paulo), Valmir Amaral (PP-Distrito Federal), Patrícia Saboya (unaffiliated-Ceará), Marcelo Crivella (PL-Rio de Janeiro), Raul Jungmann (PPS-Pernambuco), Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh (PT-São Paulo), João Paulo Cunha (PT-São Paulo), Maria Lúcia Cardoso (PMDB-Minas Gerais), Alberto Goldman (PSDB-São Paulo), Jorge Gomes (PSB-Pernambuco), ACM Neto (PFL-Bahia), Fernando Gabeira (PV-Rio de Janeiro), João Fontes (PDT-Sergipe), Luiz Antônio de Medeiros (PL-São Paulo), and Renildo Calheiros (PCdoB-Pernambuco).

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