

Victims of Kidney Trafficking Ring Acquitted in Brazil

Contributed by Márcia Wonghon
Friday, 08 October 2004

Fifteen Pernambucans (born in the northeastern state of Pernambuco), each accused of selling one of his kidneys to an international organ trafficking ring last year, were acquitted in Federal Court.

They were at liberty awaiting the verdict of the trial. The enticers, on the other hand, remain in prison.

They are: retired Pernambuco Military Police captain, Ivan Bonifácio, and two Israeli citizens, Gedalya Tauber and Eliezer Ramon.

Judge Amanda Lucena accepted the argument presented by the Federal Public Interest Defenders' Office that the defendants, all of them residents of the periphery of the capital were unaware of the consequences of their act.

They accepted the proposal to sell one of their kidneys, because they were experiencing financial difficulties and didn't know about the legal implications and the complications that could arise from the operations.

The surgeries were performed in a hospital in Durban, South Africa. The organs were for European and South African recipients.

The group's lawyer, Conceição Jansen, informed that some of the organ donors suffered aftereffects and are unable to get jobs, because, in addition to this problem, they are publicly stigmatized as traffickers.

The scheme, which was exposed by the Federal Police in December, 2003, handled around US\$ 4.5 million in one year, from the sale of 30 kidneys.

The Federal Police's discovery of an international network of traffickers in human organs who operated in the capital of Pernambuco, recruiting poor people to sell one of their kidneys did not reduce the number of donors in Pernambuco.

In light of repercussions surrounding the scheme, organ transplant specialists in the state were fearful that the population would lose confidence in public health services and come to view donations with reluctance.

According to the coordinator of the Pernambuco Transplant Center, Josemberg Campos, the decline did not occur, due to ample coverage in the local press, which demonstrated that neither professionals nor institutions that are part of the public system were involved in the crimes.

Agência Brasil
Translator: David Silberstein