

Brazil Has Already Freed 16,407 Slave Workers

Contributed by Adriana Franzin
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Brazil's Ministry of Labor's Special Mobile Inspection Group freed 79 workers from slave labor in the state of Pará, last week.

Some of them were sick, all of them were living in precarious conditions and deeply in debt to the local general store. None of them enjoyed any of the rights guaranteed by Brazilian labor legislation.

According to the Ministry, the workers should receive indemnity totalling US\$ 55,000 (119,740 reais). Since the Special Mobile Inspection Group was created in 1995, it has liberated 16,407 people from slave labor.

In May, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Ethos Institute of Social Responsibility launched the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor with the aim of eliminating workers exploitation in Brazil. Representatives of the civil society, government, and entrepreneurs signed the Pact.

According to the President of the Ethos Institute, Oded Grajew, because of the Pact, several companies are already contributing for the reduction in the number of workers in conditions similar to that of slaves. These companies reject suppliers whose better prices are related to labor exploitation.

The site of the Ministry of Labor and Employment has a list of companies which at some step of their productive chain use slave labor.

The list also includes businesses that do not use slave labor, but that purchase products from companies that do. For example, a supermarket that sells products from a farm that keeps workers subject to conditions that resemble slavery.

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