

Violence-Plagued Brazil Says No to Gun Control in Referendum

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Brazilians are voting Sunday on a proposal to ban all gun sales in the country. Polls show the proposal heading for a likely defeat despite gun violence that claims the lives of more than 36,000 Brazilians each year. Supporters of the ban seemed headed for an easy win until about three weeks ago, when opponents, including weapons-makers, began an aggressive media campaign.

Opponents of the ban say average Brazilians need guns to protect themselves from drug gangs and thieves. Supporters say the ban is needed to bring down the death toll from firearms.

Brazil's Health Ministry says gun homicides have already fallen eight percent in the past year thanks to a gun-control campaign launched in 2003.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says Brazil's murder rate of 21.7 per 100,000 people a year is the second-highest in the world, behind Venezuela's.

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