

Brazil Trying to Deal with Killing Sugar Cane Fields and Forced Sex

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Brazil presents a "sad picture" of fundamental rights abuses. This is the view transmitted in the Brazil 2005 Human Rights Report, organized by the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights.

According to the document, which was released last week, despite the growing strength of popular demands for accountability, it is still too early to jump for joy.

According to the president of the Deliberative Council of the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights, father Ricardo Rezende, the country is experiencing a delicate moment. He says in the preface that the report should serve as an alert to build a better society.

"In the wake of the political crisis and human rights abuses in the broadest sense, the country is currently courting the risk of despair. Expectations for actions that could have been taken by president Lula's Administration, society as a whole, and organized popular segments of civil society, chiefly the ones that defend human rights, have been frustrated," he affirms.

The document contains 32 articles dealing with topics ranging from rural violence to the situation of undocumented migrants, environmental policy, and international policies. The report presents statistics and analyses on various sectors, such as the situation of workers who plant sugar cane.

It underlines, for example, that, in their testimony, various workers refer to mills that withhold the basic food basket for workers who cut an average of less than 10 tons of sugar a day.

Workers must execute, on the average, 9,700 machete strokes to attain the 10-ton daily quota, and this causes an overall debilitation of the organism, due to the heavy workload, as well as leading to cramps and innumerable physical damages that sometimes result in heart attacks.

Another topic that is considered is violence against women. According to data published in the report, every 15 seconds a female in Brazil is prevented from going out of her home and another is forced to have sexual relations against her own will.

The document also contains an analysis on Brazilian government debt, the World Trade Organization, and the practical consequences of decisions made by the organs that comprise the Inter-American Human Rights System.

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