

Brazilian President Meets Bishop Who Went on Hunger Strike Against His Policies

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Following a two-hour meeting between Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the Catholic bishop of Barra, state of Bahia, Dom Luiz Flávio Cappio, the head of the Secretariat of Institutional Relations, Minister Jaques Wagner, declared that the government welcomes further debate on the São Francisco River integration project, but does not consider abandoning the project a viable alternative.

The project, an interbasin diversion plan, would divert water from the São Francisco River to other areas in the semi-arid Northeastern region of Brazil.

In September, bishop Cappio went on an eleven-day hunger strike to protest against the project. According to Cappio, the public hearings on the project did not take into consideration the opinions of people opposed to the interbasin diversion plan.

Minister of National Integration, Ciro Gomes, who participated in the Lula-Cappio meeting, declared that it will be hard for the present discussion to result in modifications in the plan.

"The government has decided to move ahead with the project. What is important in this debate is to find the most efficient means to get water to those who need it," said the Minister.

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