

The Message Is Out: In Brazil, Sex Tourism Is a Crime

Contributed by Michèle Canes
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The non-governmental organization (NGO) "World Vision" launched, this week, a campaign with the objective of combating sexual tourism in Brazil and around the world.

The measure is supported by the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism and by the National Secretariat of Human Rights. The campaign is also taking place in Thailand, Costa Rica, and Mexico.

Ronaldo Martins, the NGO's director of institutional relations, says that the campaign intends to inform tourists that sexual tourism is a crime. According to Martins, many foreign visitors commit the crime because they believe they won't be punished.

"We have noticed that the behavior of tourists that have this intention is based on some factors. They think that in countries like ours, the legislation is lighter than in their countries, which is not true."

According to the director, signs, folders, and posters are being placed in main tourist spots and airports of the cities of Belo Horizonte, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Fortaleza, Recife, Manaus, and Belém.

"Messages are mostly in English, since the objective is to reach foreign tourists."

The coordinator of the program "Sustainable & Child Tourism", of the Ministry of Tourism, Sidney Alves Costa, says they are investing on capacitating hotels with the objective of diminishing the number of children and adolescents in prostitution.

"We are working on training the whole tourism productive chain, coaching them on how to proceed when they either suspect, or are sure, of the occurrence of cases of sexual exploitation," he said.

The World Vision coordinator emphasizes that in order to effectively combat sexual tourism, population awareness is a very important issue.

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