

7 Minors Are Massacred and Dismembered in Rio, But Brazil Barely Notices

Contributed by José Wilson Miranda
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The community of Del Castilho, in the North side of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, started this Friday, January 26, the grim task of burying its seven youngsters who were shot and dismembered in the morning of the previous day, apparently as a result of a fight between gangs to control drug trafficking in the area.

According to some reports, none of the youths, all of them minors, had any criminal record. Others dispute this, however, and say they all might be gang members.

Maurício da Costa Andrade, 17, was the first to be buried, yesterday morning in the Caju cemetery. Then it was the time for Jaime Clécios Ferreira da Silva and Rodrigo Santiago, both 17, to be buried at the São Francisco Xavier cemetery, also in the Caju neighborhood.

The bodies of André Luiz Santos, 16, and Floriano Felipe da Conceição, 14, are still in the Coroner's Office with two other bodies who had not been identified by the end of Friday.

While the massacre was shocking to the community and the victim's families, Brazilian and Cariocas (Rio's natives) didn't seem that shaken or outraged by it. After so many other massacres where bodies were counted by the dozen, seven didn't seem such a big number.

O Globo and Jornal do Brasil, Rio's two most important dailies, didn't ignore the carnage, but they minimized its importance on their front pages.

The police still don't know what led to the slaughter, but early information suggests that the youngsters were picked up randomly and were killed just for being from a favela dominated by a rival gang.

According to a survivor who managed to escape, he and his companions had left the Vila do João favela, in the Maré complex, to play soccer in Morro do Adeus (Farewell Hill), in the Ramos neighborhood.

The van they were riding in, he told police, was intercepted by a group of gunmen who made them leave the car and then tortured the youngsters before shooting and dismembering the bodies. Some of the cut-up limbs and body parts were left inside a Fiat Siena in front of the Del Castilho's Medical Aid Station.

The survivor, whose name wasn't revealed, since the young man fears for his life, has fled his parents home and is in a undisclosed location.

The mass murder seems to be the responsibility of the TCP (Terceiro Comando Puro - Third Pure Command), which heads the drug trade mainly in Acari and Parada de Lucas shantytowns.

Their main foes are the CV (Comando Vermelho - Red Command), a more powerful gang from where they branched with the help of some former policemen who decided to change sides.

But the youngsters who were killed lived in a neighborhood controlled by another rival gang, the ADA (Amigos dos Amigos - Friends of Friends).

There is another version being studied by the police, however. According to the Bonsucesso police chief, Aldari Viana, authorities suspect that the youngsters killed were on a mission to invade the Morro do Adeus and retake the control of the drug trafficking that the TCP had wrested from the ADA.

Last December, milícias (private groups formed by former policemen) had taken over Morro do Adeus after expelling the drug traffickers. But earlier this week the TCP gang managed to get their old turf back.

Another murder occurred on Thursday may be linked to the massacre. The police suspect that a burned body found at the Maré Complex is that of Ronaldo Ferreira do Nascimento, aka Mocotó, 33, who had just left jail on parole.

An anonymous caller told the Disque-Denúncia police hotline that Mocotó was murdered by order of another drug lord, Edmilson Ferreira dos Santos, better known as Sassá, who is in jail.

There are two police bureaus on the case. The 44th Police Precinct from Inhaúma wants to know who left the Fiat Siena with the dismembered bodies in Del Castilho.

The 21st Police Precinct, from Bonsucesso is trying to find out the kidnapping culprits. Agents there say that one of those who were massacred, Maurício, is a criminal known as Cheiroso (the pleasant smelling one) and someone who is known to have already tried for three times to invade the Morro do Adeus.