

New Massacre of Youngsters in Brazil. Police Are Main Suspect

Contributed by Elma Lia Nascimento
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Five young men were murdered Saturday night in a school of Nova Iguaçu, in the Baixada Fluminense, an area to the north of Rio and part of the Greater Rio de Janeiro. For police chief Fábio Pacífico Marques, head of the 58th Police Bureau a death squad might be behind the massacre.

"This is a typical action of an extermination group, pseudo vigilantes who use violence to try to impose their will before the community."

This was Rio's third massacre in less than 40 days.

The police chief noted that the gunmen were careful to gather all the shell casings after the shooting to make more difficult the investigators' work. He also disclosed that three of the victims were killed point blank in the head after having been dominated.

It's possible that the crime was committed by policemen. It's possible that the reason is drugs, but it's still too early to know for sure," said Marques.

According to the story told police by witnesses it was around 10 pm on Saturday when at least 8 hooded men holding weapons invaded the Cacilda Becker Public Education Integrated Center (Ciep) in the Miguel Couto neighborhood. While some witnesses say the youngsters were playing ball, others told authorities they were smoking marijuana.

Relatives of the victims say the young men used to get together on Saturdays to play soccer. "They even might be playing ball," stated the police chief. "But we are going to investigate the possibility that drugs were the main motive for the crime. Three of the men had criminal records, two for some stupid stuff and one for drug trafficking."

Residents of the area informed that people were celebrating a birthday party in the school. Some initially thought the hooded gunmen were part of the party, this before they started shooting. When the police arrived the bodies of the victims were lying down in the school's patio.

The bodies of Reginaldo Melo da Silva, 24 and Jacinaldo Mendes da Silva, 30, were buried Sunday in the Nova Iguaçu municipal cemetery. The bodies of the other three youngsters, Wilson Araújo de Andrade, 17, Carlos Eduardo Silva, 25, and Rafael Gomes Pereira, 22, were still at the Coroner's Office late yesterday.

The preceding Rio massacres occurred January 24 and 25, when 11 people, among them seven teenagers aged 14 to 18 were killed in the north side of Rio.

The largest Rio's slaughter, however, happened a little less than a year ago, on March 31st, 2005, when a band of policemen randomly murdered 30 people, whose only crime was to be walking down the streets of the Nova Iguaçu and Queimados neighborhoods. None of the victims had a police record.