
Arabs and Jews Mix and Mingle in Brazilian College

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Brazil's Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado (FAAP) exchange course agreement, started in 2002, had not received as many Arab students as it is receiving this year. The number is still small, but already shows that the Arabs are also curious about Brazil. This term, there are two Moroccans and one Lebanese in São Paulo college.

In August, the arrival of an Egyptian is scheduled. "I believe that they are seeking a peaceful place to study, where they will not be discriminated. Here we have rooms with Jews and Arabs and they all get on well together," stated a spokesperson for international relations at FAAP, Lourdes Zilberberg.

According to her, FAAP has agreements with over 200 schools from 36 countries and receives, on average, between 60 and 70 foreign students per term. However, in the first term of this year alone, the college received 90 students.

"The figure surprised us. FAAP has been participating in many international fairs and has been working on great promotion abroad. I believe that this contributed to the increase in the number of students," stated Lourdes.

The students from Morocco arrived at FAAP through an agreement between the college in São Paulo and ESC Clermont Graduate School of Management, in France, where many Moroccans go to school after finishing secondary school.

The Lebanese student, in turn, came on his own accord. "These agreements are for student exchange. We send students abroad and they send students here. Here we offer a scholarship, and they do too," explained Lourdes. The agreement is both for graduate studies and post-graduate studies.

"I chose Brazil because I wanted to learn more about the country. I only knew what I had seen on television. I like the country very much, especially the people, beaches and caipirinhas (a traditionally Brazilian lemon and cane spirit beverage)," said Moroccan student Othman Rouissi in Portuguese. He is studying business administration, having arrived in Brazil in January and scheduled to stay until June.

According to Rouissi, who intends to work in the area of finance, during the four months he has spent in São Paulo he has already made many Brazilian friends, and has even travelled to different states, having visited Rio de Janeiro and Florianópolis (respectively in the southeastern Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro and Santa Catarina, in the south).

When the term finishes, Rouissi will return to France to do an internship and then will travel to Canada, but, according to him, this will not be his last visit to Brazil. "I intend to return on my own accord. I want to show my parents that Brazil is not as violent as is shown on television," he said.

The choice of studying in Brazil is not only for the fact of visiting a different country. In the case of Moroccan student Hoyam Louassit, 23 years of age, the main reason for her trip was to learn Portuguese.

"I intend to work for a multinational in the foreign relations area and for this reason I need to learn various languages," stated the student, who already speaks Arabic, French, English and a little Spanish and Portuguese.

Hoyam is also studying administration at FAAP, but her favorite subject is marketing. She is also returning to France in June to do an internship, but before returning, Hoyam wants to travel around Brazil. "Brazil is very beautiful. The beaches are lovely and the people are friendly," she said.

According to her, up to the end of her stay in Brazil she should be speaking Portuguese better. "I speak in the group work and in the streets. I think I am going to manage to reach my objective, but I am afraid of returning and forgetting it all," stated Hoyam.

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