

Journalist Who Exposed Politicians Having Sex with Minors Is Murdered in Brazil

Contributed by Francesco Neves
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The Brazilian journalist, who four years ago denounced a scheme to lead minor girls into prostitution in Porto Ferreira, a small city in the interior of São Paulo state, Brazil, was shot to death Saturday night, May 5. He was drinking with a friend at the outside tables of a Porto Ferreira bar when he was murdered.

Luiz Carlos Barbon Filho, 37, who was nominated for an Esso Prize - the most prestigious award given journalists in Brazil - had been receiving death threats since he uncovered the scandal involving politicians and other influential men in the 55,000-residents town.

The police still don't have suspects, but are working with the hypothesis that the newspaperman's death is related to his line of work.

Eduardo Henrique Campos, Porto Ferreira's chief of police, told reporters that Barbon had a column in the local newspaper and had made several enemies. He was pressured to close his own newspaper, which was called Realidade and was published in Porto Ferreira.

He thought about moving to another city but he loved the place and ended up deciding that leaving would be a bad move for his career. He wrote columns for two newspapers in town: JC Regional and Jornal do Porto. He was also a contributor for Radio Porto FM.

"He might have been murdered," said chief Campos, "due to some new information he has been working on and that was bothering someone, but it also might be something from the past."

In August 2003, the journalist unveiled the corruption of minors story, a scheme that implicated five councilmen, four businessmen and a waiter. At the time all of these men were arrested and charged with promoting and taking part in parties with minor girls who were paid to have sex with them in nearby country houses.

Barbon was shot twice. The police have already three witnesses, including friend Alcides Marcílio Catarino, who was with him and was also hit by a bullet's fragments. The journalist's wake was in Porto Ferreira, but he was buried yesterday afternoon in the municipal cemetery of his nearby hometown of Tambaú.

According to witnesses, two hooded men riding a motorcycle and wearing black clothes were responsible for the crime. The man who was on the rear jumped from the moto, got close to the journalist and shot twice. The shots hit the man's leg and abdomen. Barbon was taken to the emergency room but couldn't resist the wounds.

The murdered journalist's widow, Cátia Rosa Camargo, revealed that the husband had been receiving repeated anonymous death threats through letters and phone calls. To get rid of the constant harassment Barbon had disconnected his fixed line phone and used only a cellular.

Besides Cátia, the newspaperman leaves two children he had with her: Juliana, 14 and Luiz Felipe, 10.

"He was very polemic," said the wife. "He used to denounce and to name the names of all the people he denounced. So much so that he ended fighting with a councilman he had attacked." And she asks for justice: "I hope that justice will find and punish those responsible for my husband's death."

Of all people denounced by Barbon in 2003 only waiter Walter Mafra remains in jail. One of the businessmen charged ran away and was never caught.

Businessman Luiz Dozzi Tezza served only two of his six-year sentence. Former councilmember Luiz Mantovani Borceda was released on parole. He will be able to serve the remaining of his nine-year sentence in freedom.

Councilman Luís César Lanzoni, sentenced to 45 years in jail - later reduced to 10 years - for the crime, was re-elected in 2004, while still serving time. He was one of the best vote-getters. Lanzoni is already back in office after being released from prison in November of last year.