

Brazil Might Get More Palestinian Refugees as Well as Kenyan Ones

Contributed by Felipe Linhares
Friday, 11 January 2008

A new group of Palestinian refugees may be received by Brazil in 2008. This according to Luiz Paulo Barreto, the president of Brazilian National Committee for Refugees (Conare), who asserted that one of the lines of work of the committee will consist of evaluating the integration of the 108 Palestinians that arrived in Brazil last year.

"Should the experience prove successful, which is already happening, then we will be able to receive another group of Palestinians who are still at risk," explained Barreto.

According to the Conare, the Palestinians who arrived in the country were living for two years in precarious settlements in a city in Iraq.

"They arrived in Brazil and took Portuguese lessons, as well as psychological, medical, humanitarian and social assistance. They are doing very well now. Many of them say that they are Brazilians already."

Barreto stated that, this year, the goals of the Conare are: to continue receiving refugees from other countries and remaining attentive to international conflicts, such as those in Kenya.

According to him, the Brazilian refugee law, which became effective ten years ago, is considered by the United Nations (UN) as one of the best in the world. For Barreto, the Brazilian law has all of the necessary instruments in order to ensure protection and integration to the refugees.

Currently, 3,700 refugees are living in Brazil. Of that total, approximately 70% are of Angolan nationality. According to the president at the Conare, most of the Angolans came to Brazil as a consequence of the civil war in the country, which lasted 21 years.

"Brazil received the Angolans for a matter of linguistic and cultural identity. Although the war is over, many still feel insecure about going back," said Barreto, who is also the executive secretary at the Ministry of Justice.

The partnership between federal government, the UN and the civil society allows for refugees to be forwarded to health and education programs and professional training courses.

"When the conflict ends, they will arrive at their countries of origin in better conditions than when they left. This is the objective of international protection."

The refugees receive an identification document granted by the Brazilian government. After six years, they may apply for a permanent residence visa or for Brazilian citizenship.

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