
Brazilians Who Promote or Use Morning-After Pill Threatened with Excommunication

Contributed by Thaddeus M. Baklinski
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Brazil's Catholic Archbishop José Cardoso Sobrinho has condemned a plan by Recife city officials, in the northeastern Brazilian state of Pernambuco, to distribute the morning-after pill during the upcoming Carnival festival and has warned that those who use the pill are subject to excommunication.

"This policy is wicked and immoral, and in this case, both those who use it and those who incite its use are committing a crime punishable by excommunication," Archbishop Cardoso said.

The Archbishop also noted that distribution of the abortifacient pill "is aberrant and illegal," since abortion is illegal in Brazil.

The Archbishop's stand against this "aberrant and illegal" plan may fly in the face of government initiatives, but falls in line with the opinions of most Brazilian citizens.

A new poll carried out by the DataFolha firm in Brazil has revealed that 87% of Brazilians think that having an abortion is "morally wrong," and that less than 1% of those surveyed approve of abortion for any reason.

"The result of the research is a cold shower for the pro-abortion strategy of Health Minister José Gomes Temporão and shows a clear tendency that we have seen in recent polls. The government's pro-abortion campaigns are at odds with the real Brazil," said Carlos Alberto di Franco, professor of Journalistic Ethics at the University of Navarra in Brazil.

"Brazilians are against abortion. It's not just an opinion, it is a fact statistically measured in an opinion poll. Only because of this does the government move more slowly. There are moral issues that go beyond mere statistics; but the legalization of abortion, today and right now, would be a completely anti-democratic act," Di Franco added.

Recife, with a population of about 1.4 million, hosts one of Brazil's most colorful and frenzied carnivals. According to Mayor João Paulo Lima e Silva the morning-after-pills will not be given out wantonly, but rather for cases of rape and broken condoms.

Bishop Antônio Augusto Dias Duarte of the Life and Family Commission of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops said, "The church has nothing against having fun during Carnival, but the banalization of human sexuality is something we cannot tolerate. It will only serve to diminish inhibitions and encourage orgiastic behavior. Though the pill is marketed as a contraceptive, critics say it prompts abortion. The church opposes both."

Bishop Duarte also criticized the federal government's plan to distribute millions of condoms nationwide during the festivities, ostensibly to help fight AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in the world's largest Roman Catholic country.

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