
Please, Don't Disturb Brazil's Congressmen. They Are Out Partying

Contributed by Edison Bernardo DeSouza
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If you think of visiting Brazil, June may be a good time as an important event is just taking place: Festas Juninas, Brazil's Annual June Parties. Each year during the month of June, each region of the country celebrates their local devotion to the so-called June Saints: Saint Anthony (June 13), Saint John (The Baptist) on the 24th and Saint Peter (June 29).

All over Brazil, neighborhoods organize local festivities, decorating streets with small colorful banners and preparing delicious dishes. At night Brazilians go out dressed in countrymen costumes, gather around bonfires - don't forget it's Winter, this time of the year - eat popcorn or corn on the cob, drink hot wine, or quentão (a kind of mulled wine but made with cachaça, a Brazilian sugarcane liquor) and doing their famous quadrilha (square dancing).

The festivities are so contagious, that even Brazilian congressmen decided to adhere. This week in order to attend the Festas Juninas Brazilian congressmen decided to request a little break from important projects that are due for vote in the Brazilian Congress - House of Representatives.

It is not only June parties that are worrying the representatives. Municipal elections taking place at the end of the year is also an important issue on the agenda. While important projects are stuck in the congress waiting for approval, Brazilian congressmen are traveling in order to join their political party conventions and support their candidates.

According to the daily newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo, at least 150 of Brazil's 513 representatives have not yet showed up to work this week. The president of the Congress, deputy Arlindo Chinaglia, has threatened to discount their salaries. To prevent absence, telegrams were sent asking deputies to please come to work.

Representatives have informed the Brazilian Senate that they will vote important projects in order to attend the unmissable June parties.

While Brazilian representatives celebrate, another important event is taking place. This week, the AMB (Brazilian Magistrate Association) has released a listing of names of all congressmen involved in corruption: the dirty list.

Concerned with the increase of corruption, the organization, composed by 13 judges, has launched the free election campaign, in order to motivate voters to make rightful decisions. "The focus of this campaign is to provide voters with access to information, so they can make a free and aware decision," stated Judge Paulo Henrique Machado, coordinator of the Association.

Brazilian senators will also be in recess this week in order to enjoy Northeast June Parties as well.

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He lived in the US for close to 10 years and participated in volunteering activities in social works agencies. DeSouza currently lives in São Paulo where he teaches English as a Second Language, and is pursuing further advancements in his career. He is particularly interested in economics and human rights articles.