



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

BRAZIL: 15 year-old is killed in Socioeducative Unit in Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro, 7 March 2015. The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) and Justiça Global (JG) express deep concern over the death of a 15 year old child at the Escola João Luiz Alves in the city of Rio de Janeiro on March 6, 2015.

According to the information received, the 15 year old was beaten to death by 4 other juveniles in the same cell at the Escola João Luiz Alves. Only two days before the killing the OMCT and JG, together with the Local Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, the Public Defender's office, and a member of the United Nations Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture (SPT), visited detention units for juveniles of the Department of Socioeducative Actions (DEGASE) at Rio de Janeiro and manifested their concerns to the authorities about the precarious conditions of detention and the action taken by the authorities to tackle the climate of violence.

"This tragic death does not come at a surprise. There have been no improvements after the SPT visit in 2011. On the contrary, the conditions have been aggravated due to the overpopulation and the abuse of detention without adequate guarantees and subsequent judicial control " .Said Emio Gines, member of the SPT invited by OMCT for this mission.

During the visits in the juvenile detention centres serious problems were noted, including overpopulation; allegations of institutional violence; lack of female staff; the abuse of deprivation of liberty for not violent crimes; and children being in preventive detention for longer periods than prescribed by law.

"The deaths in the socio-educative centres in Rio are inadmissible within the framework of rule of law, but unfortunately they do not come as a surprise to us. Everything that we saw and heard this week reflects a Socio-educative System that only exists in paper. The reality that we saw are filthy and overcrowded centers, with insufficiently trained staff operating under precarious work conditions; paving the way for generalized practices of violence. There is little possibility of reintegration within such conditions." Said Carolina Bárbara, coordinator of child rights activities at the OMCT.

The OMCT mission in Brazil assessed the implementation of the 2011 recommendations of the UN Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture for the Juvenile Justice System or Socioeducative System, as it is called in Brazil. During the visit to the country OMCT representatives met with judges, public prosecutors, public defenders, State representatives; a group of mothers of children that have been deprived of liberty within the centers of DEGASE; the DEGASE syndicate, councils of the rights of the child, and the social work and psychology council.

“Unfortunately this is not an isolated case. The situation of the socio-educative system in Rio is of extreme seriousness and demands articulate actions of the public power when facing the massive and indiscriminate use of deprivation of liberty and the inhumane conditions in which we find the children at the ‘internment units’. Said Isabel Lima, from Justica Global.

The OMCT and JG urge Brazil, and especially the government of the state of Rio, to adopt with urgency, according with its international obligation concrete actions to protect the life and physical integrity of all the children under its custody, including through diligent investigations to verify possible action or omission of the state in the present case.

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