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Brazil: Carandiru Trial -- A clear message to those in charge

Police officers in command are responsible for the actions of their subordinates. That was the clear message coming from the Sao Paulo court yesterday, Amnesty International said commenting on the conviction of Colonel Ubiratan Gurnarnes for his part in the massacre of 111 detainees in Carandiru on 2 October 1992.

"The jury's decision means that attributing the failures of Brazil's policing system to the misdemeanours of individual policemen is no longer acceptable," the organization added.

"Those in high command must be made accountable for their chain-of-command responsibilities, and the human rights violations perpetrated by police acting with no respect for the rights of the most marginalised sectors of society."

Amnesty International hopes this ruling will point the way in other massacre trials where similar evidence indicates the responsibility of police officers in charge.

"It is now time for those in political office to be made to answer for their staggering complacency about serious violations occurring under their authority," the organization added. "They must account for their continued inability to produce a professionally trained police force which respects the rights of all Brazilians, including the marginalised, the poor and those in detention," the organization added.

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