

182/99

AI INDEX: AMR 19/25/99

EMBARGOED FOR 1 OCTOBER 1999

Brazil -- 7th Anniversary of Carandiru massacre: contempt and neglect for 111 lives

The appalling delay in bringing those responsible for the Carandiru massacre to justice underscores the contempt and neglect in which prisoners are held in Brazil, Amnesty International said on the eve of the 7th anniversary of the incident.

The organization called upon the Brazilian authorities not to let the police, who killed 111 prisoners seven years ago, get away scot-free.

"The Carandiru massacre was one of the most horrific incidents ever documented by Amnesty International in Brazil," said Fiona Macaulay, researcher on the country.

"It is incredible that seven years on, not a single policeman has been brought to justice. The Brazilian authorities must confront the issue of impunity as a key step to ending the killing and torture of prisoners."

Military police stormed Latin America's largest prison, the Casa da Detenção (popularly known as Carandiru) in São Paulo state on 2 October 1992 after a riot broke out. When they withdrew after an 11 hour killing spree, 111 inmates were left dead.

The officer commanding the operation was subsequently elected to political office, choosing the number 111 as his electoral ticket. Until January 1999 he benefited from parliamentary immunity, but in June the courts decided that he should face a jury trial. Eighty-five other policemen were not charged until March 1998.

Every year prisoners die at the hands of police, guards or other prisoners, or from sheer medical neglect. But the Brazilian authorities do not know who they are, how many they are, or what could have been done to prevent their deaths.

Amnesty International is currently engaged in an international campaign for a complete structural overhaul to Brazil's penal system. As part of that campaign, a delegation from the organization's International Secretariat will be visiting Brazil from 4-8 October to discuss concrete measures for reform with the authorities.

As well as calling for a strategy to tackle impunity, the delegation will be urging the setting up of an inspection and monitoring system to expose and prevent human rights violations against detainees. ENDS.../

Amnesty International's latest report on Brazil -- *No One Here Sleeps Safely*, published in June -- highlights pockets of good practice in the country but also reveals that tens of thousands of Brazilian detainees are held in inhumane and life-threatening conditions, and are at constant risk of violent death and torture. **For more information please call Amnesty International's press office on +44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>**