

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Brazil: Continuing the fight against torture will break the cycle of violence

Amnesty International strongly condemns the reported rape of a female teacher held hostage during a riot in Franco da Rocha juvenile detention unit in São Paulo this past weekend. The organisation recognises that the authorities have an obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish those found responsible for this crime.

However, this event, and the weekend's lamentable series of riots and escapes from the State Foundation for the Well-being of Minors (Fundação Estadual do Bem-Estar do Menor - FEBEM) units must not be used as an excuse to undermine the fight against torture in São Paulo's juvenile detention system. They must be placed in the context of the dehumanisation that has characterised the system for so long. The years of work by NGOs, the public prosecutors office and many civil society groups who have fought for a humane FEBEM system must not be thrown away overnight in response to inevitable calls for harsher treatment of juvenile offenders.

If tragic events such as these are to be avoided in the future, it is essential that the authorities in São Paulo continue in their efforts to stamp out torture and human rights abuses within the system. Only then can the vicious cycle of violence and mayhem be broken.