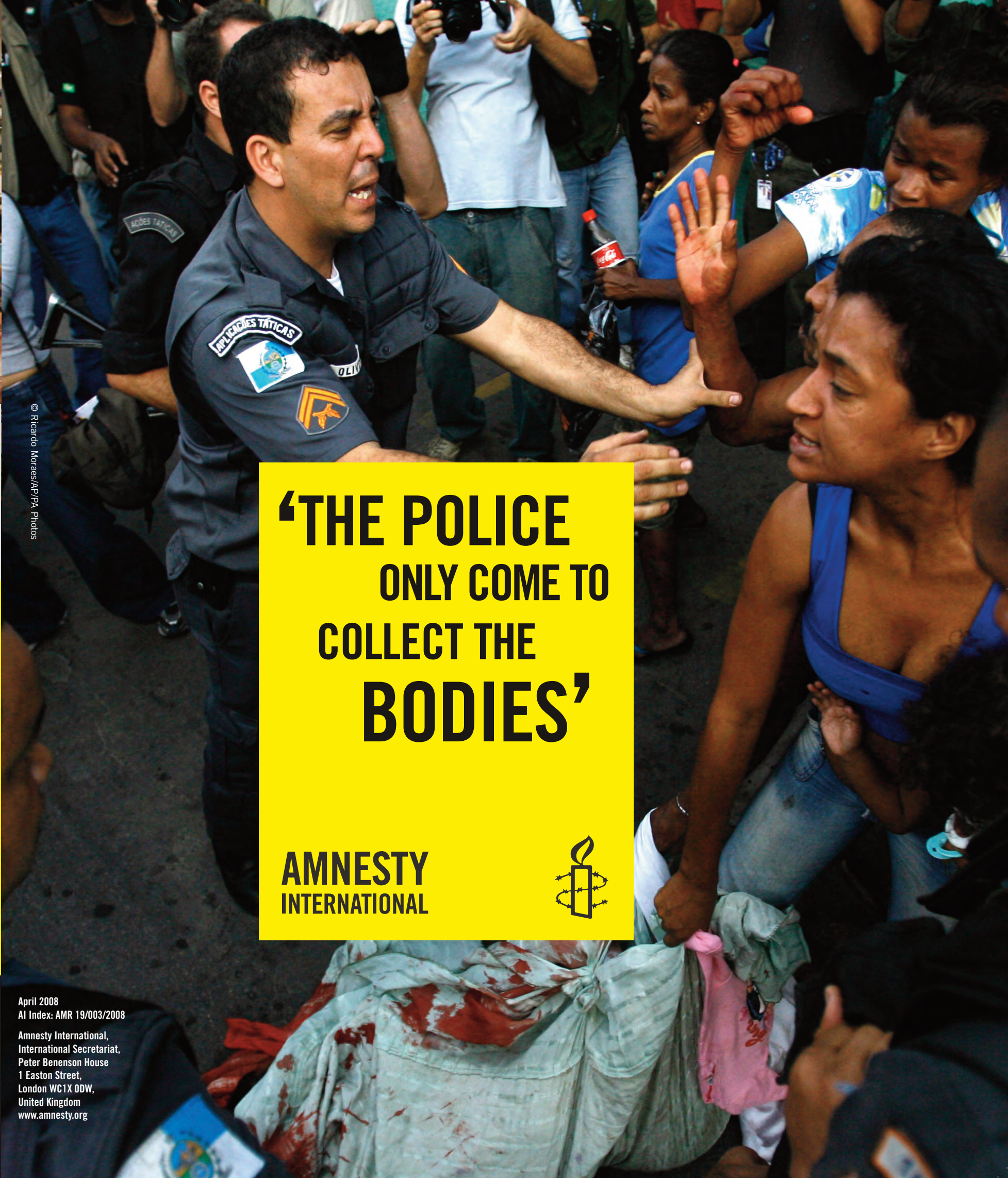




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Ivaneti de Araujo, of the Homeless Movement of the Centre (Movimento Sem Teto do Centro, MSTC) in São Paulo, speaks to a crowd of people occupying the Prestes Maia building, 2007. Many women told Amnesty International how their involvement in the MSTC had empowered them. Following an international and national campaign, the residents of the Prestes Maia building were all rehoused.

Front image: Residents and police officers argue next to the body of an unidentified man killed during one of the many police operations in Complexo do Alemão, Rio de Janeiro, June 2007. Police killed at least 19 people during this operation.



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TAKE ACTION NOW

Please write to the Brazilian authorities calling on them to:

1. Identify, create, implement and monitor projects under the PRONASCI plan to meet the specific needs of women, especially those living in socially excluded communities, so that they can live their lives and access services without fear of violence.
2. Take immediate steps to improve access to crèche facilities.
3. Take immediate steps to identify and address the factors which are limiting access to health for women in socially excluded communities, with particular emphasis on pregnant women and new mothers.

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'THE POLICE ONLY COME TO COLLECT THE BODIES'

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

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Women in Brazil's excluded communities are struggling to live their lives and fight for justice against a backdrop of criminal and police violence, discrimination and state neglect. However, Brazil's vibrant women's movement is ensuring their stories are at last starting to be heard.

Across the country, millions of Brazilians are living in communities abandoned by the state. In neighbourhoods bereft of services and riven with crime, women face a daily struggle to survive. In urban centres, shootouts between gangs and police during militarized policing operations cost hundreds of lives and destroy property and livelihoods. Long-term closures of schools, businesses and health clinics during these operations have a huge impact on women, reinforcing patterns of social exclusion.

Debates about violence have generally focused on young men – the overwhelming majority of perpetrators and victims. The impact of male violence on women's lives, however, has been largely ignored.

In some neighbourhoods, a complete lack of police presence has created lawless zones. Amnesty International interviewed mothers who fled their

In May 2006 Amnesty International delegates visited a project working with teenage girls in the neighbourhood of Santo Amaro in Recife. A number of 13 and 14-year-old girls and some of their parents talked about life in their communities. Daily shootouts between criminal gangs meant the girls were forced to hide under their beds for safety. They talked about a 16-year-old girl who was killed on her way home when a shootout began and of another killed after being raped.

One girl said, "people leave rather than be killed. If you report it, you'll die". Another described how outsiders thought residents from Santo Amaro "are worthless". They all felt that the police had no presence in the community. One said: "The police only come to collect the bodies".

Alana Ezequiel, was shot dead on 5 March 2007, a week before her 13th birthday. She was killed by a stray bullet during a shootout between police and drug traffickers in the Morro do Macaco community in Rio de Janeiro. Alana was taking her younger sister to her crèche. Local NGOs protested that police regularly time their operations with children's journeys to or from school, because they believe the children's presence will offer them greater protection.

homes when their communities were taken over by criminal gangs. Rising numbers of women living alone or as single parents because their partners have been killed or imprisoned are at heightened risk of criminal violence.

Childcare is a major concern. Many women work long hours in poorly paid and insecure jobs far from home, often as domestic workers. Crèche places are scarce and while some women are able to rely on families or friends for childcare, others said they were forced to lock children in the house while they were out for fear that they would be recruited by drug gangs or injured in shootouts.

In October 2007 the National Rapporteur for Education heard reports from residents and community leaders of how persistent levels of criminal and police violence had resulted in the closure of schools and crèches, the shortening of the school day and increased truancy.

"There is no point in investing only in public security and dismantling the structures if you do not put a school in their place or a health centre."

National Rapporteur for Education,
"Guerra no Complexo do Alemão viola direito à escola",
Noticias do Planalto, 11 October 2007

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF URBAN VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL

Social and economic exclusion put women at greater risk during pregnancy and childbirth. Health professionals are reluctant to enter excluded communities because of the violence. In Jardim Ângela in São Paulo, for example, Amnesty International was told that women about to give birth had to be taken to hospital by community police officers because no other transport was available.

Many of the women interviewed by Amnesty International were suffering from some form of trauma. Few, if any, had access to proper medical or psychological help and those that did invariably received this from a social project and not from the state.

Amnesty International witnessed many important initiatives by women at risk, women human rights defenders and other human rights activists. Together they have developed a whole new form of activism and empowerment. Such initiatives continue to show what can be achieved and, by contrast, the extent to which the state is failing women in these communities.

At the time of writing, the federal government had launched a plan to combat the root causes of criminal violence (the PRONASCI plan). After many empty promises, it is hoped that the plan may finally signal the authorities' recognition that something has to be done to address the problems that are costing Brazil generations of young people.

For more information see Amnesty International's report, *Picking up the pieces – Women's experience of urban violence in Brazil* (AMR 19/001/2008).

Dona Maria was severely depressed. Her son had recently been shot dead. She was also running a temperature after being bitten by a large rat inside her house. Rio de Janeiro, 2006.