



People protest against police during one of the major police operations in Complexo do Alemão, Rio de Janeiro, June 2007. At least 19 people were shot dead by police during this operation.

© Ricardo Moraes/AP / PA Photo

Front image: Fifteen-year-old L. walks beside a police officer after she was freed.

Fifteen-year-old L. was arrested by police on 21 October 2007 in the city of Abaetetuba, Pará State, for allegedly stealing a mobile phone. A woman police officer put her in a police holding cell with between 20 and 30 men. L. was kept there for 24 days. During that time she was reportedly raped five or six times a day. According to reports, the other detainees withheld her food and only gave it to her in exchange for sex. When L. tried to protest, she was burned with cigarettes and lighters. When some of the prisoners complained to the police officers that as a girl she should be taken out of the cell, officers cut her hair to try to hide the fact that she was a girl.

During her detention L. was brought before a judge who failed to have her removed from the cell. At no time was L.'s family informed of her detention, although this is required by law as she was a minor.

After her release, L. said police officers had threatened to kill her if she did not leave the area; she was taken into protective care outside the state. L.'s family was also reportedly threatened and was subsequently taken into the witness protection programme.

## TAKE ACTION NOW

Please write to the Brazilian authorities, calling on them to:

1. Ensure that steps are taken to investigate promptly all suspected cases of human rights violations perpetrated by state officials, including police; to protect the victims and witnesses; and to bring to justice those responsible.
2. Identify, create, implement and monitor projects under the PRONASCI plan to meet the specific needs of women, especially those living in socially excluded communities, guaranteeing their right to the provision of effective and human rights-based security.
3. Immediately start a review of the situation of women and girls in the detention system and, in collaboration with civil society, set out a targeted and timely plan to address their specific needs, especially guaranteeing their safety from human rights violations, including rape and sexual abuse, and guaranteeing adequate access to health care.

Minister of Justice  
Exmo. Ministro da Justiça  
Sr. Tarso Genro  
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco "T"  
70.712-902 – Brasília/DF – Brasil  
Fax: + 55 61 3322 6817

Federal Human Rights Secretary  
Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos  
Exmo. Secretário Especial  
Sr. Paulo de Tarso Vannuchi  
Esplanada dos Ministérios – Bloco "T"  
– 4º andar,  
70.064-900 – Brasília/DF – Brasil  
Fax: + 55 61 3226 7980

© Marlene Bergamot/Folha Imagem

# ABUSE, INTIMIDATION AND RAPE

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.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion – funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

April 2008  
AI Index: AMR 19/004/2008

Amnesty International,  
International Secretariat,  
Peter Benenson House,  
1 Easton Street,  
London WC1X 0DW,  
United Kingdom  
www.amnesty.org



# WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF URBAN VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL

Police violence in Brazil, including threats, beatings and extrajudicial executions, has been documented by Amnesty International for many years. Although men are the targets of much of this violence, women and girls are at particular risk of certain types of violence and intimidation.

During violent and discriminatory police operations women are subjected to illegal searches by male officers, abusive and discriminatory language and intimidation, especially when they attempt to intervene to protect a relative. Corrupt police officers act with impunity in excluded communities, threatening women who try and expose injustices. Women and girls have also experienced sexual abuse at the hands of the police.

**On 16 January 2007 a teenage boy and a 14-year-old girl were stopped by military police officers near a drug sales point in the community of Jardim Elba, Sapopemba. According to the report they made to a local human rights NGO, they were taken to a nearby school yard and beaten with sticks. They were then taken to the school playground where the girl was sexually abused by one of the officers.**

**The case was taken up by the Sapopemba Human Rights Centre who reported the police officers involved. In September, the police officer accused of sexually abusing the girl arrested her for alleged drug trafficking. The girl was detained for two weeks and released when the prosecutor found the charges to be unfounded. However, she told Amnesty International that she continues to receive death threats from the police officers accused of abusing her.**

Although they make up a small percentage of the prison population in Brazil, more and more women are being imprisoned, especially for drug-related offences. Used as "mules" or as decoys by drug gangs, women are seen as disposable by criminals and corrupt police officers alike. Once caught up in the criminal justice system, women are at risk of specific forms of violence and human rights violations.

Their specific needs as women are not being met by the penal system. In May 2006 Amnesty International visited the Colonia Penal Feminina in Recife, Pernambuco. Delegates saw two babies in the prison – one just 11 days old – being cared for in an insanitary and overcrowded cell. They heard allegations of beatings and torture. Elsewhere in Brazil women have reportedly been sexually abused by guards.

Throughout the criminal justice system, the state is clearly failing to address the specific needs of women. Brutalized by the police and maltreated in detention, women are continuing to suffer systematic human rights abuses. Above all the state has failed to provide a safe and reliable way for women to report human violations. The result is widespread impunity for those responsible, further entrenching the pattern of human rights violations.

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).

**Women have long been the hidden victims of Brazil's crumbling justice system. Women in excluded communities experience violence and intimidation at the hands of the police. As increasing numbers of women are imprisoned, they face chronic overcrowding, cruel, inhuman or degrading conditions and, in some instances, sexual abuse and rape.**

