

HS Law Corp.
Otavio Haverroth Silva, SBN#343486
P.O. Box 90487
San Diego, CA 92169
(510) 241-9336

Non-Detained

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW
IMMIGRATION COURT
900 Market Street, Suite 504
Philadelphia, PA 19107

_____	)	
In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Andrey Cabral de Lima	)	File No. A. 216-914-876
	)	
In Removal Proceedings	)	
	)	
_____	)	

Immigration Judge: Melissa Fox

Next Hearing Date: September 8, 2026 at 8:00 AM.

**RESPONDENT'S COUNTRY CONDITIONS IN SUPPORT OF ASYLUM AND
WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL**

Exhibit list

Exhibits:

Pages:

Exhibit 1

Excerpts from Country Conditions Reports

1-14

Exhibit 2

CC 1: Brazil 2024 Human Rights Report - United States Department Of State

15-28

Exhibit 3

CC 2: Brazil Country Security Report - Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC)

29-45

Exhibit 4

CC 3: Terrorist Designation of Comando Vermelho and Primeiro Comando da Capital - United States Department Of State

46-47

Exhibit 5

CC 4: Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security 2025 - Brazilian Forum on Public Security

48-60

Exhibit 6

CC 5: State of Denial? Organized Crime Is Driving a Deadly Surge in Violence in Brazil, Taking Advantage of Public Security Failures - Global Initiative

61-65

Exhibit 7

CC 6: First Capital Command - PCC - InSight Crime

66-70

Exhibit 8

CC 7: Crime Strengthens Crime: The Rise of the Biggest Gang in the Southern Hemisphere and a

71-86

Exhibit 9

CC 8: Brazil: Freedom in the World 2025 - Freedom House 87-89

Exhibit 10

CC 9: How a Brazilian Prison Gang Became an International Criminal Leviathan - The Guardian 90-96

Exhibit 11

CC 10: Rio Police Undermine Public Safety - Human Rights Watch 97-99

Exhibit 12

CC 11: Is Brazil on the Verge of Becoming a Narco-State? - BBC News Brazil 100-107

Exhibit 13

CC 12: Country Policy And Information Note Brazil: Organised Criminal Groups March 2025 - Uk Home Office (HO) 108-120

Exhibit 14

CC 13: The Government of Brazil, the European Union and UNODC launch Protecting Futures: Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Children by Criminal Groups in Brasilia - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Brazil 121-122

Exhibit 15

CC 14: Cycles of Vulnerability - Brazil's Ministry of Justice and Public Security 123-129

Exhibit 16

CC 15: Combating factions: Where has Minas Gerais 130-132
failed and what new combat tactics are being
implemented? - Estadão de Minas News Portal

Exhibit 17

CC 16: Government of Minas Gerais places leaders 133-134
of PCC, CV, and TCP on federal list of most wanted -
O Fator

Exhibit 1

EXCERPTS FROM COUNTRY CONDITIONS REPORTS

CC 1

**BRAZIL 2024 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT -
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; and serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists.

The government did not always take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

CC 2

**BRAZIL COUNTRY SECURITY REPORT -
OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
(OSAC)**

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime “C” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

Violent crime remains a key concern for large parts of the country, with several large cities having high homicide rates. Almost every year since 2017 overall homicides have gone down, reaching the lowest levels in over a decade. However, some areas like the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil have seen higher rates than the rest of the country. The national homicide rate in 2023 was around 18.5 homicides per 100,000 residents. In

2023, there were 37,639 homicides, a 3.3% decrease from 2022. Around 90% of homicide victims are male. Conflicts between armed criminal factions competing for territorial control between each other and state security forces play a major role in driving homicide numbers.

Organized crime exists on a large scale. The largest Brazilian criminal organization, Primeiro Comando da Capital (First Capital Command, or PCC), is based in São Paulo, but has affiliations in many parts of the country. PCC is a violent prison gang that controls the majority of illegal contraband and drugs coming into/out of the prisons in São Paulo, and remains an organization of great interest to the government of Brazil and the police. Comando Vermelho (Red Command, or CV) is Brazil's second largest criminal group with a presence in 23 of Brazil's states. It similarly has roots in the prison system, with a base in Rio de Janeiro. PCC, CV, and other similar groups participate in a variety of illicit markets in Brazil.

CC 3

TERRORIST DESIGNATION OF COMANDO VERMELHO AND PRIMEIRO COMANDO DA CAPITAL - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Today, the U.S. Department of State is designating Comando Vermelho (CV) and Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) and intends to designate both groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), effective June 5, 2026.

CV and PCC are two of the most violent criminal organizations in Brazil. Together, they command thousands of members and have orchestrated brutal attacks against Brazilian police officers, public officials, and civilians. Their influence and illicit networks extend far beyond Brazil's borders, across our region and into our country.

**BRAZILIAN YEARBOOK OF PUBLIC SECURITY
2025 - BRAZILIAN FORUM ON PUBLIC SECURITY**

The rate of reported missing persons increased by 4.9% in Brazil in 2024, totaling 81,873 cases reported to Civil Police authorities nationwide. After a sharp decline in 2020 and 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic period, the number of reports began to rise again, reaching, in the most recent year, the highest figure since 2018. Based on recent statistics, an average of four missing persons reports per hour were filed with law enforcement authorities.

The increase in missing persons in Brazil coincides with a period in which a significant decline in intentional violent deaths has been observed, alongside the expansion of criminal organizations such as the PCC - First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital) and the Red Command (Comando Vermelho). Following conflicts stemming from internal splits in previous years, these groups began consolidating new territories in partnership with local criminal organizations. It is therefore noteworthy that the states currently located in the most violent regions of the country also present the largest increases in the number of missing persons during the period analyzed.

Even during the democratic period, the practice of disposing of the bodies of executed individuals in clandestine graves has persisted, although research on the subject remains scarce. This practice has been primarily adopted by criminal factions and militias as a means of eliminating rivals without drawing the attention of the State. If there is no body, there is no crime, nor an investigation.

Most of these individuals end up appearing in the statistics as “missing persons,” which is considered by the police to be an atypical occurrence, that is, not a crime. And since it does not constitute, a priori, a criminal offense, this type of report frequently does not result in the opening of a police investigation, lacks material evidence, and is not subject to statutes of limitation (Ferreira, 2013).

In light of the significant increase in missing persons reports in Brazil, particularly in regions marked by high homicide rates and disputes among criminal organizations, it is urgent to recognize that this dynamic may be concealing an even more perverse dimension of criminality: execution followed by concealment of the body. The absence of specific legislation defining forced disappearance as a crime hampers the institutional response to the problem, contributing to the invisibilization of victims and to the suffering of families who are deprived even of the possibility of mourning.

CC 5

STATE OF DENIAL? ORGANIZED CRIME IS DRIVING A DEADLY SURGE IN VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PUBLIC SECURITY FAILURES - GLOBAL INITIATIVE

In the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index ('the Index'), Brazil's mafia-style group indicator score was 8 out of 10, placing the country second in South America, after Colombia and Venezuela (9.5), for this category of criminal actor. These large criminal groups from the south-eastern region of Brazil have increased their footprint across the country with two goals in mind: establishing new routes for transnational drug exports and diversifying their revenue streams into other profitable illicit trades, including wildlife trafficking and illicit gold mining in the resource-rich Amazon region, and extortion and protection racketeering in densely populated urban margins.

Under the Index, Brazil ranks 18th out of 35 countries in the Americas for overall resilience indicators against organized crime (scoring 4.92 out of 10). This low resilience score is due to difficulties in implementing anti-organized crime policies at a national level. Indeed, the 2023 Index gave Brazil a score of 4.5 out of 10 for national policies and laws that can effectively combat organized crime, and the same score was given to law enforcement capacity. With state governments controlling police forces, the federal government has its hands tied and has largely been unable to coordinate effective public security solutions to rising criminality.

FIRST CAPITAL COMMAND - PCC - INSIGHT CRIME

The PCC is run at the highest level by a group of powerful regional leaders, many of whom are incarcerated. It organizes itself in cells, with local leaderships working on a vertical hierarchy. The gang's highest cell is known as the General High Command (Sintonia Final Geral), and is run by Marcola and other six leaders. Dues are collected from members of the organization and are used to pay lawyers, buy off prison guards and police, and to purchase drugs and weapons.

The PCC is strongest in his home base of São Paulo, Brazil's most populous and economically important state, though it maintains a presence around the country. In recent years, it has expanded its activities internationally, developing operations in nearly every country in South America in addition to establishing ties with European crime groups.

The PCC's ambitions are not limited to the domestic environment. Its recent spread throughout Latin America has resulted in it filling a void in countries where no homegrown criminal organization has taken charge. The gang has also been diversifying the types of crime in which it operates through participation in cybercrimes, such as money laundering with cryptocurrencies and virtual fraud, as well as public contracting graft.

The gang's diffuse leadership structure has made it resilient to challenges from rivals, as well as authorities' attempts to disrupt its leadership. Despite tensions among top leaders, the group will likely remain among Latin America's most powerful criminal organizations due to its strong territorial control and its involvement in a multitude of criminal economies.

CRIME STRENGTHENS CRIME - INSIGHT CRIME

They drew up a constitution and a set of rules. This included prohibiting rape and sexual assault in the prisons. But it wasn't just about protecting each other. They also enveloped you like a family would. New initiates were baptized. They called each other "brother," and, like blood relatives, they required a lifetime commitment.

They were also violent. From the beginning, anyone who crossed them got killed.

The PCC rotates leaders frequently inside and outside of the prisons, and seeks to forge consensus rather than issuing top-down directives. Its factions have widespread independence as long as they do not break some basic rules and always give some of the proceeds to the upper echelon. To be sure, Marcola remains the leader of the PCC or, as Ivana says, the CEO.

But Marcola is part of a board of directors, and like the other senior members, he has a single vote when the board has to come to an important decision. Below this board is the criminal structure, which is organized into cells that do not interact with one another. The PCC is, in other words, a kind of network of criminal entrepreneurs. Akin to a secret society like the Masons, it's able to undertake national strategies and support one another, but also acts on a local level very independently of one another. As they like to say, *o crime fortalece o crime* – crime strengthens crime. This amorphous and compartmentalized aspect of the PCC, as well as its use of the committees, makes the job of law enforcement very difficult.

That means that if I'm talking to a person in one committee, they have no knowledge of who is in the other committee, Ivana said.

In the end, no one who they captured that is part of this structure can tell her the beginning or the end of the story.

(...) In many of these places, as Ivana told me, the PCC is the de facto police, and no one wants to get in trouble with the police.

Where the state is absent, she said, that's where the criminals are. They are where the people are going hungry, don't have hospitals, don't have security. She added that in some poor areas, especially those in big cities like São Paulo, the PCC has the respect and the support of those who live there.

CC 8

BRAZIL: FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025 - FREEDOM HOUSE

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

Gang violence, militias, and police violence in parts of Brazil, especially favelas, have impeded free movement and access to education.

CC 9

HOW A BRAZILIAN PRISON GANG BECAME AN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LEVIATHAN - THE GUARDIAN

But over the past five years, investigators say the PCC – which the US now calls one of the world's most powerful organized crime groups – has morphed into an even more formidable force after forging lucrative alliances with partners ranging from Bolivian cocaine producers to Italian mafiosi. Today, the group boasts tens of thousands of members and has a growing portfolio of interests, including illegal goldmines in the Amazon. It controls one of South America's most important trafficking routes – linking Bolivia and Brazil to Europe and Africa – and is partly responsible for a tsunami of cocaine that has brought car bombings, assassinations and gunfights to parts of Europe.

“If someone is using cocaine in France, England or Spain there’s a very good chance it got there through the hands of the PCC,” said Lincoln Gakiya, a prosecutor from São Paulo’s organized crime taskforce, Gaeco, who estimates the group now makes \$1bn a year – almost entirely from international trafficking.

CC 10

RIO POLICE UNDERMINE PUBLIC SAFETY - HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Rio de Janeiro authorities have conducted military-style operations again and again for years without weakening criminal groups. On the contrary, those organizations have expanded to other states and neighboring countries.

Since the operation, police have retreated from the Alemão and Penha neighborhoods and organized crime’s grip on those communities is as strong as ever. The people who died will soon be replaced by other poor, young men with few job and educational prospects.

Rio de Janeiro, and Brazil, needs a new public security strategy based on data and science, which truly dismantles dangerous criminal groups by prioritizing intelligence and investigation, and by targeting money laundering, arms trafficking, and penetration in the legal economy.

CC 11

IS BRAZIL ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING A NARCO-STATE? - BBC NEWS BRAZIL

The financial growth of criminal factions occurred in parallel with their expansion throughout the national territory—and even internationally. After dominating communities in Rio de Janeiro and the outskirts of São Paulo, CV and PCC went beyond their original borders in search of control over both cocaine trafficking routes and drug sales points.

In this process of expansion, they grew through their own ventures, recruiting members across the country, or in association with local groups.

According to a survey released in 2024 by the National Secretariat for Penal Policies (Senappen), linked to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP), there are currently 88 criminal organizations spread throughout the country.

Some of them exert territorial control over the communities in which they are present: they monitor who enters and leaves, impose rules of conduct, and punish those who do not follow the rules.

Around 31 million Brazilians live in conditions like these, in areas dominated by gangs, according to a recent survey conducted by Datafolha at the request of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security.

This represents 19% of the population, 5 percentage points higher than in 2024 – a jump that gives an idea of the extent of the problem's progression.

The percentage is not only high by Brazilian standards. It is probably the highest observed in Latin America, says Benjamin Lessing, a professor at the University of Chicago.

CC 12

COUNTRY POLICY AND INFORMATION NOTE BRAZIL: ORGANISED CRIMINAL GROUPS MARCH 2025 - UK HOME OFFICE (HO)

3.1.5 Brazil has a diverse criminal landscape, with approximately 80 criminal gangs and militia groups operating alongside and against the 2 largest gangs in the country, the PCC and the CV. The PCC has approximately 100,000 members operating in almost every Brazilian state as well as internationally, with its base in Sao Paulo. The CV has approximately 30,000 members, operating in about 20 Brazilian states and other Latin American

countries, and has its base in Rio de Janeiro. The majority of other OCGs are present in 3 states or less and generally ally with either the PCC or the CV (see Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs), Militias).

4.1.4 The federal police generally work hard to combat OCGs, but have limited human resource in relation to the size of the country (there are 13,000 federal police officers and Brazil has 16,000 kilometres of land border and a population of approximately 212 million people). A lack of cooperation and communication between federal and state entities challenges the efficacy of combatting OCGs.

5.1.2 Different factions of the same OCG can and do communicate with each other meaning that the PCC and CV would have the ability to track a person of interest across Brazil, due to their presence throughout the country. Whether they would have a desire to do so would depend on the alleged infraction. In general, stealing from an OCG, informing on them, personally disrespecting a group leader and failure to repay a large debt could result in a person being tracked. What constitutes a large debt would depend on the perception of the creditor. Former group members are monitored and are targeted if they break the conditions of being permitted to leave. Generally, these issues relate to people who have been part of the OCG. However, prominent public figures such as prosecutors and politicians who attempt to disrupt OCG activity are also likely to be tracked throughout the country (Political violence, Tracking of persons by OCGs, Leaving an OCG).

Every year, an estimated one billion children worldwide are subjected to violence or neglect. Children represent around 15 per cent of all intentional homicide victims, with organized crime causing levels of lethal violence comparable to those observed in armed conflicts. In Brazil, for example, 2,489 intentional violent deaths of children and adolescents aged 0 to 17 were recorded in 2022 alone, with a strong concentration among Black male adolescents living in territories marked by structural vulnerabilities and the presence of organized crime.

Across regions, armed and criminal groups systematically and often transnationally recruit, use, and exploit children to shield adult perpetrators from detection and accountability, and to expand their illicit activities. The consequences for these children are immediate and severe, they are exposed to grave dangers as well as long-lasting physical and psychological harm. Whether through overt force, economic pressure, intimidation or manipulation, criminal groups target children at their most vulnerable, drawing them into cycles of violence that devastate young lives, undermine community stability and contribute to insecurity that extends across borders. These dynamics increasingly involve the use of encrypted messaging, online gaming environments and algorithmic targeting linked to illicit economies, including drug trafficking and arms smuggling, which creates new challenges for prevention and child protection systems.

CC 14

CYCLES OF VULNERABILITY - MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SECURITY OF BRAZIL

National and international research indicates that, although the entry of children and adolescents into illegal drug markets is concentrated in the 13-16 age group, exploitation is expanding to increasingly younger ages, reflecting a shift in exploitation strategies by criminal organizations. In Brazil, this process coincides with periods of intensified urban violence and the reorganization of organized crime.

One of the most powerful motivators for entering the illegal drug market is the immediate economic gain, mainly to help their family. For a teenager with low education and no professional qualifications, the formal market offers few opportunities beyond precarious, poorly paid jobs without social protection.

Beyond income, illegal drug markets offer something psychologically powerful for teenagers: status, identity, and a sense of belonging. In an environment of structural violence – reflected in extreme inequalities, racism, sexism, and social exclusion – the practices and ideas developed in trafficking networks become contagious in larger social contexts, normalizing violence and crime among teenagers growing up in vulnerable territories.

This dynamic reveals the cruelest face of trafficking as one of the worst forms of child labor: the adolescent exploited by criminal organizations becomes the most exposed and fragile link in a chain of violence that frequently culminates in detention or premature death.

Leaving illegal drug markets for teenagers is a complex process that faces severe structural barriers. Although many of them express a desire to leave criminal networks, their individual will is hampered by fear, the absence of viable legal opportunities, and a lack of robust institutional support.

CC 15

COMBATING FACTIONS: WHERE HAS MINAS GERAIS FAILED AND WHAT NEW COMBAT TACTICS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED? - ESTADAO DE MINAS NEWS PORTAL

In research on public safety in the state, the criticisms from agents were harsh. They indicated a view that Minas Gerais was taking small-time drug dealers, exposed at the retail level, out of circulation, but was failing to reach the top of organized crime.

“The growth of organized crime and systematic violations of human rights contribute to maintaining a scenario of widespread and normalized impunity. The cases that reach the sentencing stage are, for the most part, those involving arrests in flagrante delicto (...) far from any response to the dynamics of organized crime (which demand intelligence operations, targeting the networks of influence, corruption, capital flows and money laundering of criminals), (...) the main culprits for the growth of intentional homicides in the country,” assesses Crisp/UFGM.

By focusing on the retail level of drug trafficking, the fight against criminal organizations would suffer from the maintenance of the organized crime structure, contributing to the growth of violations and the widespread impunity of criminal leaders, according to the research. Isolated and fragmented efforts by corporations and institutions also generate an overlap of efforts and prevent a coordinated and structural response, in the perception of the agents.

CC 16

GOVERNMENT OF MINAS GERAIS PLACES LEADERS OF PCC, CV, AND TCP ON FEDERAL LIST OF MOST WANTED - O FATOR

Organized by the Ministry of Justice, with the help of the states, the national list of the most dangerous fugitives shows the impact of factions from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo on public security in Minas Gerais. Of the eight criminals indicated by the state government for the federal list, most are linked to the Rio de Janeiro factions Comando Vermelho (CV) and Terceiro Comando Puro (TCP) or to the São Paulo Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), which dispute territory and routes across the country.

“The targets share common characteristics: they are highly dangerous criminals, convicted of serious crimes, and are among the main leaders of the three largest criminal factions in the country: PCC, Comando

Vermelho, and Terceiro Comando Puro,” says Detective Murillo Ribeiro de Lima, a specialist in police intelligence and organized crime and former coordinator of the Wanted program in Minas Gerais, to O Fator .

The police chief points out that this year armed disputes over territories in Minas Gerais have intensified between the CV and the PCC, which has allied itself with the TCP.

“In recent months, the most intense conflicts in Minas Gerais have been driven by territorial disputes in the capital, the Metropolitan Region, the Zona da Mata, and the North of the state. Of particular note in this scenario is the war between Comando Vermelho and Terceiro Comando Puro, the latter supported by the PCC and various local gangs, an alliance known as 'Tudo 3',” adds the police chief.

Exhibit 2

Brazil 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

The human rights situation in Brazil declined during the year. The courts took broad and disproportionate action to undermine freedom of speech and internet freedom by blocking millions of users' access to information on a major social media platform in response to a case of harassment. The government undermined democratic debate by restricting access to online content deemed to "undermine democracy," disproportionately suppressing the speech of supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro as well as journalists and elected politicians, often in secret proceedings that lacked due process guarantees. The government also suppressed politically disfavored speech on the basis that it constituted "hate speech," a vague term untethered to international human rights law.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; and serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists.

The government did not always take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were several reports police committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. Some killings were attributed to a police operation against transnational criminal organizations in Sao Paulo State in the first half of the year and a police operation that took place from July 2023 to April in Baixada Santista, a coastal area including the port city of Santos.

In July, a São Paulo court charged two officers from a police shock battalion (ROTA) with aggravated homicide and obstructing evidence in the death of Fábio Oliveira Ferreira, who was killed in the operation in July 2023. One defendant was Captain Marcos Correa de Moraes Verardino, one of the coordinators of the operation, who allegedly fired three shots at Ferreira after he had surrendered. The other defendant, Corporal Ivan Pereira da Silva, also of ROTA, allegedly shot the victim twice in the chest while the victim was lying on the ground. In December, the two defendants were acquitted by courts in São Paulo State. The São Paulo Public Prosecutor's Office of appealed the decision, and higher courts were considering that appeal at year's end.

In April, Roraima State Civil Police reported it launched an operation to dismiss a group of officers from the military police of Roraima suspected of being part of a militia and an extermination group, according to a *Globo*

news report. More than 100 officers were investigated, and several arrests were made. The investigation examined cases in which police officers allegedly provided armed security for illegal miners, robbed and tortured competing invaders, and robbed the miner bosses themselves.

There were developments in the politically motivated 2018 killing of city councilwoman Marielle Franco and her driver Anderson Gomes, in Rio de Janeiro. In March, police arrested Chiquinho Brazão, a Federal Chamber deputy (representative), and his brother, Domingos Brazão, a member of the Rio de Janeiro State Audit Court, for their alleged role in ordering the 2018 killing of Franco. The brothers remained in custody and were charged with qualified homicide and attempted homicide. Rivaldo Barbosa, who was the chief of police of Rio de Janeiro when Franco was killed, was also arrested in March for allegedly helping plan the killing and for obstruction of justice. In November, two former police officers were sentenced for the killings. Ronnie Lessa was sentenced to 78 years and nine months for firing the shots that killed Franco and Gomes and injured one of Franco's aides. Élcio de Queiroz was sentenced to 59 years and eight months for driving the getaway car.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government authorities.

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution and law provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media. Supreme Court (STF) rulings, however, restricted the freedom of expression for individuals it deemed to be in violation of the law prohibiting antidemocratic speech.

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

The law prohibited politically motivated judicial censorship, but there were reports of censorship. The government censored online content deemed in violation of STF orders, which instructed platforms to remove content that allegedly spread misinformation related to the electoral system or judicial institutions or to disparage judicial officials with online threats or harassment. Court records reveal that Justice Alexandre de Moraes personally ordered the suspension of more than 100 user profiles on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), disproportionately suppressing the speech of advocates of former president Jair Bolsonaro instead of taking narrower measures to penalize content that incited imminent lawless action or harassment. The government telecommunications regulator Anatel ordered internet service providers to block X by order of the STF on August

31, after the company failed to appoint a legal representative and pay outstanding fines for failure to remove content in compliance with orders issued by the STF and the Superior Electoral Court. The STF authorized fines of 50,000 reais (\$9,000) per day to individuals or companies who accessed the platform via a virtual private network (VPN), although no fines were reportedly assessed. The STF authorized X to resume its operations in the country on October 8 after the company complied with court orders and paid outstanding fines. Other media companies were subject to similar content removal orders. This broad repression blocked Brazilians' access to information and viewpoints on a range of national and global issues. Additionally, the court's temporary prohibition on the use of a VPN, under penalty of fine, further eroded freedom of the press by removing privacy protections from individuals whose ability to blow the whistle on government corruption hinged on their capacity to do so anonymously.

Nongovernmental criminal elements at times subjected journalists to threats or violence due to the journalists' reporting on their criminal activities.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law provided for freedom of association for all workers (except members of the military, military police, and firefighters), the right to

bargain collectively with some restrictions, and the right to strike. The law prohibited antiunion discrimination, including the dismissal of employees who were candidates for, or holders of, union leadership positions, and it required employers to reinstate workers fired for union activity.

New unions were required to register with the Ministry of Labor, which would accept the registration unless objections were filed by other unions. The law stipulated certain restrictions, such as *unicidade* (in essence, one union per occupational category per city), which limited freedom of association by prohibiting multiple, competing unions of the same professional category in a single geographical area. Unions that represented workers in the same geographical area and professional category could contest another union's registration.

The law stipulated a strike could be ruled "disruptive" by the labor court and the union could be subjected to legal penalties if the strike violated certain conditions, such as if the union failed to notify employers at least 48 hours before the beginning of a walkout or end a strike after a labor court decision. Employers were not allowed to hire substitute workers during a legal strike or fire workers for strike-related activity, provided the strike was not ruled abusive as defined in the law.

The law obliged a union to negotiate on behalf of all registered workers in the professional category and geographical area it represented, regardless of whether an employee paid voluntary membership dues. The law included

collective bargaining rights, such as the ability to negotiate a flexible hourly schedule and work remotely. The law permitted the government to reject clauses of collective bargaining agreements that conflicted with government policy.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining were generally respected, according to observers. Collective bargaining was widespread in establishments in the private sector.

In the view of nongovernmental organization (NGO) experts, the government usually effectively enforced applicable laws, and penalties were commensurate with those for other laws involving denials of civil rights, such as discrimination. Penalties were regularly applied against violators.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law provided for a minimum wage, which was higher than the official poverty income level. The law limited the workweek to 44 hours and specified a weekly rest period of 24 consecutive hours, preferably on Sundays. The law also provided for paid annual vacation, prohibited

excessive compulsory overtime, limited overtime to two hours per workday, and stipulated any hour worked above the monthly limit had to be compensated with at least time-and-a-half pay; these provisions generally were enforced for all groups of workers in the formal sector. The constitution also provided for the right of domestic employees to work a maximum of eight hours per day and 44 hours per week, and to receive a minimum wage, a lunch break, social security, and severance pay.

Occupational Safety and Health

The Ministry of Labor set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards that were consistent with internationally recognized norms, although unsafe working conditions were prevalent throughout the country, especially in construction, according to media reports. The law required employers to establish internal committees for accident prevention in workplaces. Inspectors identified unsafe conditions and responded to worker complaints, but the number of inspections conducted was lower than necessary. The law also prohibited firing employees for their committee activities. Workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, although those in forced labor situations without access to transportation were particularly vulnerable to situations that endangered their health and safety.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

The Ministry of Labor addressed problems related to minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws. In the view of NGO experts, officials effectively enforced OSH laws. Penalties for violations included fines that varied widely depending on the nature of the violation. Penalties were in general commensurate with similar crimes such as fraud or negligence. Penalties were regularly applied against violators. The number of labor inspectors was insufficient to enforce compliance, according to the Labor Inspectors Union. Inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions.

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the informal sector represented almost 40 percent of the workforce.

Gig workers were not considered employees, and food delivery and ride-share companies did not consider the workers who provided services through their platforms to be employees. These workers were not protected by labor laws.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were no reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

In July, President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva reinstated the Special Commission on Political Deaths and Disappearances to deal with state crimes and political repression that occurred from 1961 to 1979. The commission was created in 1995 but was closed in 2022 by the government of then President Bolsonaro.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

The constitution prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements; however, political figures and rights groups alleged the government held hundreds of individuals accused of participation in protests that led to the invasion of government buildings on January 8, 2023, in detention for several months without filing charges. They also alleged these protesters were denied access to legal counsel.

Lengthy pretrial detention was a problem. The length of pretrial detention frequently equaled or exceeded the maximum sentence for the alleged crime, according to the National Security Forum. As of 2023, approximately one-quarter of the prison population was awaiting court trial, according to the Brazilian Forum on Public Security.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3. Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution prohibited such practices, but there were credible reports government officials employed them.

Military police officers in Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, were accused of torturing Vladimir Abreu de Oliveira for approximately 40 minutes before attempting to hide his body by throwing him from a bridge in May. An investigation revealed Abreu de Oliveira suffered multiple severe injuries while alive, leading to his death. Five officers were indicted, with charges ranging from torture resulting in death to omission of assistance, and two were in preventive detention. Civil police were

conducting a separate investigation.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

Child Marriage

The legal minimum age of marriage was 18, or 16 with parental or legal representative consent. While child marriage declined in recent years, the practice of early marriage (marriage before age 18), especially among girls, was common, according to UNICEF. The government did not always effectively enforce the law.

In March, a report from the newspaper *Econômico Valor* noted approximately one in five women married before turning 18.

c. Protection to Refugees

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for providing protection to refugees.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

According to the Brazilian Israelite Federation, there were approximately 120,000 Jewish Brazilian citizens, of whom approximately 70,000 lived in the state of São Paulo, according to 2021 data, and 34,000 in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The law criminalized the manufacture, sale, distribution, or broadcast of symbols, emblems, ornaments, badges, or advertising that used the swastika for purposes of publicizing Nazism. The penalty was two to five years' imprisonment.

In June, the Brazilian Israelite Confederation (CONIB) and the Israelite Federation of the State of São Paulo (FISESP) reported a sharp increase in the number of cases of antisemitism after the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023. From January to May, 886 cases of antisemitism were recorded, almost six times more than in the same period in 2023. Most of the attacks occurred in digital environments, such as social networks and messaging apps.

Following Israel's military response in Gaza to the Hamas October 2023

terrorist attacks, on February 18, President Lula da Silva stated that “what is happening in the Gaza Strip... it’s a genocide.” In the speech, he then compared what was occurring in Palestine with “when Hitler decided to kill the Jews.” On February 19, CONIB stated it “repudiated the unfounded statements by President Lula comparing the Holocaust to the State of Israel’s defense against the terrorist group Hamas,” saying the government had adopted an “extreme and unbalanced posture in relation to the tragic conflict in the Middle East.”

On October 21, the Public Ministry of Santa Catarina’s Special Task Force to Combat Organized Crime arrested four individuals, allegedly members of a neo-Nazi group, for inciting discrimination and planning violent acts in different regions of the country. The arrests were part of “Operation Overlord,” which took place in the states of Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Sergipe, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul. According to CNN Brasil, the operation aimed to combat antisemitism and hate speech and prevent the planning of violent acts. The individuals arrested allegedly were part of a band that performed at neo-Nazi events in several regions.

For further information on incidents in the country of antisemitism, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, please see the Department of State’s annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

Exhibit 3



OSAC Country Security Report

Brazil

Published: February 5, 2025

This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State COUNTRY Travel Advisory and [Brazil Country Information Page](#).

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Brasília

Av. Das Nações Sul, Quadra 801, Lote 3, Brasília-DF.

Tel: +55 (61) 3312-7000

Hours: 0800 – 1700, Monday to Friday.

After-hours Emergencies: +55 (61) 3312-7400.

U.S. Consulate Porto Alegre

Av. Assis Brasil, 1889 Passo d'Areia, Porto Alegre-RS.

Tel: +55 (51) 3345-6000

U.S. Consulate Recife

Rua Gonçalves Maia, 163, Boa Vista CEP, 50070-060 Recife-PE.

Tel: +55 (81) 3416-3050

U.S. Consulate Rio de Janeiro

Avenida Presidente Wilson, 147 – Centro, Rio de Janeiro-RJ.

Tel: +55 (21) 3823-2000

U.S. Consulate São Paulo

Rua Henri Dunant, 500, Chácara Santo Antônio, São Paulo-SP, 04709-110.

Tel: +55 (11) 3250-5000

U.S. Consulate Branch Office in Belo Horizonte

Note: Does not offer consular services.

OSAC Country Chapters

São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Porto Alegre have active OSAC chapters.

Contact [OSAC's Americas team](#) with any questions.

Brazil Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should exercise increased caution due to crime.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brasília and Belo Horizonte as being **HIGH**-threat locations for crime, and Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo as being **CRITICAL**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

Crimes of opportunity such as armed robbery, pickpocketing, purse snatching, and smash-and-grab thefts occur with the greatest frequency. Criminals engaged in this activity are often armed and will target their victims indiscriminately, with a preference for persons projecting affluence and a lack of awareness of their surroundings. Targeted items include wallets/purses, jewelry, and electronics. Cell phones are of particular interest. It is not uncommon for quick snatch-and-grab robberies of phones. Store electronics in the trunk of a vehicle when traveling to and from an airport, and limit the number of possessions carried on your person when out and about in the city.

Street crime is an ever-present problem, especially in the evenings and late at night. Pay particular attention when traveling at night through rural areas and satellite cities, due to the significant potential for roadside robberies. Armed robberies are prevalent throughout major cities. In many of these instances, multiple armed criminals on foot or in vehicles (typically motorcycles) identify an isolated victim or take advantage of traffic jams to rob a series of gridlocked vehicles. The criminals stop in front of or alongside their victim's vehicle, present a firearm, and subsequently demand all of the victim's valuables, then depart the area. In the majority of these incidents, compliant victims are unharmed.

Foreign visitors of all nationalities, including U.S. citizens, have been victims of crime. Criminals most often target their victims due to perceived wealth and lack of awareness. There is no indication that criminals target U.S. citizens or U.S. government employees due to their nationality. Most criminals commit crimes while armed and will not hesitate to use violence if they encounter resistance. In most incidents, compliant victims were unharmed.

Foreign visitors may be more susceptible to targeting for certain crimes because they may be less likely to file a police report and/or return to testify at criminal proceedings, should police apprehend the perpetrators. Foreigners are normally seen by criminals as easier targets due to their facilitated identification and expected lack of familiarization with the local reality. Be

careful of cash transactions on the street – a hurried transaction often leaves the customer with shoddy/counterfeit goods or with counterfeit money.

Although the risk is greater at night, street crime frequently occurs during the day. Incidents of theft are frequent on city buses and metro trains. Brazil's criminals often use motorcycles in street crimes to evade police. Comply with criminals' demands; resisting increases the likelihood of serious bodily harm. Brazil's criminal justice system suffers from low conviction rates. An acute shortage of jail space in Brazil and resulting prisoner furloughs contribute to the cycle of violence. Despite laws that regulate firearms, weapons such as handguns, rifles, military grade weapons, blades, and improvised weapons are frequently involved in criminal activities. These crimes can include gratuitous violence.

Mass robberies, locally known as *arrastões*, occur when a gang of criminals sweep through public places and rob pedestrians, beachgoers, patrons, customers, and individuals stuck in traffic. An *arrastão* can occur randomly during daylight or night hours, regardless of location. Police struggle to react and capture the criminals. Comply with demands for valuables and do not resist. These have most commonly occurred in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Do not accept drinks from strangers and always watch your drink. Criminals may add scopolamine or a similar drug to your drink. This has been particularly prominent in relation to casual meetings at bars and restaurants in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as well as those utilizing dating applications in Brazil. People have woken up robbed of their valuables or sexually assaulted after accepting such advances. Criminals have also utilized dating apps to lure individuals to a location before robbing or assaulting them, which has led to loss of life. Individuals deciding to use such apps should do so with substantial caution.

Exercise extreme caution in nightclubs, especially in São Paulo, where nightclub staff have swindled patrons into purchasing bottles of alcohol without disclosing the actual price of the drinks, at times running up to US\$1,000/bottle. Security personnel have physically harassed patrons who refuse to pay and have taken their credit cards.

Criminals use a variety of scams to rob victims, including virtual kidnapping, whereby an unknown caller claims to have kidnapped a person you know, possibly a family member. Unless you immediately pay the ransom, they will harm the person in question. It only becomes clear that the kidnapping never until occurred after you pay a ransom. In another scam, an unknown caller states an employee or family member has been in an accident and needs immediate medical attention. You must provide payment for the injured individual to receive treatment—a common requirement in Brazil. This scam often targets household staff, who react without verifying with their employer.

Scams involving credit cards are common as well. Travelers using personal ATM or credit cards sometimes receive billing statements with unauthorized charges after using cards in Brazil, or discover their cards cloned or duplicated without their knowledge.

Due to the heightened risk of credit card fraud in Brazil, cybersecurity companies often note that, while still vulnerable, chip-and-PIN cards are more secure and harder to clone than magnetic swipe cards. Monitor credit card usage during and after your trip for transaction inconsistencies. Commonsense practices to guard against card fraud include inspecting the outside of an ATM for unusual or suspicious devices or equipment, and if using a credit card at a restaurant or store, making sure the employee brings the credit card reader to you. Never let anyone walk off with your credit card. There are reports of beach vendors adding additional zeroes to legitimate charges of those unfamiliar with the exchange rate. Always use an ATM in well-lighted, public areas, and never let someone “assist” you with your transaction.

Local cybercriminals target ATMs to obtain credit card and banking information, as well as portable point-of-sale (PoS) systems to obtain the information stored in the magnetic strip of credit cards. Because this scheme requires access to payment hardware, insider access is usually involved. Cyber criminals can install corrupt PoS card readers (commonly called *chupacabra*) at stores, restaurants, or ATMs. These devices steal card information wirelessly or with the help of an employee accomplice.

Avoid street vendors selling knock-off designer products; by buying them you may face a large fine.

In addition to using only trusted ATMs at major banks, hotels, or shopping malls, exchange dollars only at banks or other reputable money exchanging services. Be aware of the increased risk to credit and debit card information, and carefully monitor accounts for suspicious activity. Criminal groups have reportedly used explosives (primarily dynamite) to destroy ATMs in public areas late at night to gain access to money stored within.

Residential burglaries also pose a constant threat and concern. According to police, mobile street gangs often target residential areas in the city with more affluence. Criminals from the surrounding satellite cities travel by metro, bus, or car into these neighborhoods looking for targets of opportunity. Family members and household employees should not allow anyone to enter the residential grounds without proper identification and prearranged appointments. Local security companies that monitor security alarm systems tend to be the primary responders; local police response can be delayed for hours. Some neighborhoods employ static guard posts to monitor activity on the streets adjacent to homes. Larger properties and commercial sites generally employ 24/7 security guard services.

Typically, criminals gain entry to a property via the vehicle gate while the residents are leaving or arriving, or they threaten local staff into compliance. General countermeasures and situational awareness are strong criminal deterrents. Proper use of alarm systems to give first responders early warning, and properly checking surroundings when entering/exiting homes, have proven most effective. Residences should feature solid-core entry doors with quality deadbolts, peepholes, security grilles on all windows, adequate front and rear security lighting, and a monitored alarm system. Business and home surveillance camera systems are worthwhile investments and are effective deterrents against property crime.

Exercise increased caution in December and January. During the holiday season, Brazil experiences an increase in crime due to several factors: these include Brazil's system of prison furloughs, which allows for prisoner leave during the holidays; a higher percentage of police officers on annual leave during the coinciding summer vacations and Christmas season; and the reality that citizens receive a "13th month" salary bonus in December and are in possession of more disposable income during these months. Burglars target vacant homes and apartments during these two months with a greater frequency than the rest of the year. These crimes affect foreign visitors, who are targets on occasion due to perceived wealth.

Violent crime remains a key concern for large parts of the country, with several large cities having high homicide rates. Almost every year since 2017 overall homicides have gone down, reaching the lowest levels in over a decade. However, some areas like the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil have seen higher rates than the rest of the country. The national homicide rate in 2023 was around 18.5 homicides per 100,000 residents. In 2023, there were 37,639 homicides, a 3.3% decrease from 2022. Around 90% of homicide victims are male. Conflicts between armed criminal factions competing for territorial control between each other and state security forces play a major role in driving homicide numbers.

Organized crime exists on a large scale. The largest Brazilian criminal organization, *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (First Capital Command, or PCC), is based in São Paulo, but has affiliations in many parts of the country. PCC is a violent prison gang that controls the majority of illegal contraband and drugs coming into/out of the prisons in São Paulo, and remains an organization of great interest to the government of Brazil and the police. *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command, or CV) is Brazil's second largest criminal group with a presence in 23 of Brazil's states. It similarly has roots in the prison system, with a base in Rio de Janeiro. PCC, CV, and other similar groups participate in a variety of illicit markets in Brazil.

Assault with a deadly weapon that led to death fell 5.8% from 2022 to 2023. Additionally, attempted robbery that led to death, locally called *latrocínio*, saw a significant 22.7% reduction from 2022 to 2023.

Brazil's criminals often use motorcycles to evade police. A common street crime involves motorcycle-riding thieves driving alongside stopped cars and robbing the car's driver or pedestrians on the sidewalk. In most cases, the thieves depart after taking the victim's belongings, but sometimes victims receive injuries. Consulate employees have also been victims to these types of crimes. Comply with criminal demands for valuables, resisting increases the likelihood of serious bodily harm.

Carjacking and vehicle theft is common. Perpetrators usually carry firearms and may quickly escalate to violence. Incidents of vehicular robbery and theft declined from 2022 to 2023, by 9.5% and 3.7% respectively.

Bank robberies and assaults on ATMs and armored money trucks by criminal gangs remain a concern, yet incidents declined around 40% from 2022 to 2023, with 131 total incidents. These incidents increasingly involve the use of heavy weaponry and explosives. The criminals' superior

firepower can overwhelm police, particularly in rural interior towns. Gangs have attacked bank branches during day and night. In small cities, where the security is not as omnipresent, thieves have used explosives to assault banks, and have used innocent bystanders as “human shields,” creating a barrier to allow them to escape safely.

Cargo theft remains a major security issue on the roads throughout Brazil, despite a 10% decrease in reported incidents in 2023. Incidents increased in the north and northeast of Brazil in 2023, but São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro states saw about 82% of all incidents. Incidents of cargo theft, both from overland shipments originating at ports of entry and from storage facilities, occur frequently. Brazil’s rate of cargo theft is among the highest in the region, and of particular concern in Rio de Janeiro. Criminals target all commercial goods, although shipments of petroleum, pharmaceuticals, and mobile electronics are especially lucrative. As a result, many companies employ countermeasures, including armed security escorts for high value loads and the use of satellites to track truck movements.

Parks, beaches, and other recreational areas have experienced violent crimes, mostly at night, to include assault, theft, and sexual assault. Although assault and theft are also common during the day, higher rates of crime have been reported at night. Depart from these public areas before sundown.

Public transportation hubs, hotel sectors, and tourist areas are the locations with the highest crime rates, ranging from petty theft to armed robbery, especially at night. U.S. government personnel are discouraged from using municipal buses throughout Brazil due to the risk of robbery and assault at all times of day. Crime statistics indicate that passengers face an elevated risk of robbery or assault using public, municipal bus transportation throughout Brazil. Those utilizing metro systems in Brazil should be cautious of pick-pockets and mind their belongings closely – especially during rush hour. Sexual harassment is commonly reported on public transportation.

Crime on the roads remains a problem, especially during evening travel, traffic jams, and road closures due to protests. Carjacking and robbery occur in cities, particularly at night. Criminals take advantage of victims stopped at red lights, particularly in the evening hours, and in less dense or remote areas of the city. Call **0800-081-1078** for the Traffic Police (CTTU). Some U.S. companies use armored passenger vehicles to transport visiting senior executives they deem to be targets due to their high profile or high-value status.

Throughout Brazil, low-income informal housing developments in urban areas known as favelas (sometimes called *comunidades*, *vilas*, or *conglomerados*) are common and easily recognizable. Many of these marginalized areas lack a robust state presence and are controlled by criminal groups. They tend to more frequently see shoot-outs between criminals and police, as well as other illegal activity with a higher frequency. It is not uncommon for these areas to be in close proximity to middle or upper-income areas. These areas are off limits to U.S. government personnel and considered Level 4: Do Not Travel locations. It is recommended to avoid them, especially those without around-the-clock police presence. The [U.S. Embassy](#)

[website](#) has maps of informal housing developments in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília, and Salvador. However, the maps are not exhaustive.

Below includes additional areas of concern within each of the consular districts in Brazil and is separated by the five U.S. consular districts. To locate which consular district a particular location falls within, visit the [Contact Information and Working Hours](#) page on the Embassy website or reference the image below.

Travelers should exercise caution along Brazil's border areas. Do not travel to any areas within 150 km/100 miles of Brazil's land borders with Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Paraguay due to crime (note: this does not apply to the Foz do Iguaçu National Park or Pantanal National Park).



Figure 1: U.S. Consular Districts in Brazil.

Brasília Consular District

The Federal District (*Distrito Federal*) of Brasília was a planned city and has been the seat of the federal government since its founding in 1960. It has since grown to the fourth most-populated metropolitan area in Brazil. Several outer lying areas of Brasília, known as its Administrative Regions or “Satellite Cities” are considered Level 4: Do Not Travel locations between the hours

of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. (non-daylight hours) for U.S. government personnel, due to crime. These areas include Ceilândia, Santa Maria, São Sebastião, and Paranoá. For 2023, the homicide rate for the Federal District was about 8.0 homicides per 100,000 residents, down from 11.3 in 2022.

Bus stations in and around downtown Brasília remain a concern, including the principal station, Estação Rodoviária. Pickpocketing and armed robberies occur in these locations more frequently than in other areas of the city. Remain alert to surroundings, especially at large markets. Many foreign visitors to Brasília opt to stay in Asa Sul, Asa Norte, Lago Sul, Lago Norte, Sudoeste, and Aguas Claras.

Several states in the northern region of Brazil, which includes much of the Amazon basin, have seen higher violent crime rates in recent years when compared to other parts of the country. Manaus, capital of Amazonas state, was the municipality with the third highest homicide total in 2023 with 866, including 24 robberies leading to death. Amazonas had an overall homicide rate of 31.79. The state of Amapá saw a 59% increase in homicides from 2022 to 2023 and registered the highest homicide rate of any other Brazilian state at 41.29. The state of Pará had a rate of 30.11, with its capital city of Belém registering 284 homicides in 2023. The state of Roraima has had an ongoing challenge related to illegal mining, which has led to conflict between wildcat miners and indigenous groups. However, the state did see a 25% decrease in homicides from 2022 to 2023 with a rate of 20.42. Similarly, Tocantins saw a 14% decline to 22.76, and there was a 12% decline Goiás's homicide rate to 14.07.

The state of Mato Grosso in the center-west region registered a nearly 50% increase in attempted homicides in 2023, with a homicide rate of 23.86.

In Brazil's southeast, Minas Gerais registered a homicide rate of 12.94 in 2023.

Porto Alegre Consular District

Porto Alegre is the capital of Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul. In 2023, the state registered its biggest drop in homicides since 2010, with a homicide rate of 18 per 100,000 residents in 2023. Criminal violence in Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul peaked between 2016 and 2017, mainly due to disputes between local criminal organizations over territory. However, since the implementation of the multiagency program, RS Seguro, by the state government in 2019 crime reporting has shown a substantial drop not only in Porto Alegre, but throughout the whole state. Rio Grande do Sul security authorities continue to repeatedly deny the presence of PCC and/or CV in the state and affirm their indirect presence locally is noted in specific partnerships with local minor criminal groups such as Os Manos and Bala na Cara.

In the Porto Alegre metropolitan area, there are currently over 1,000 surveillance cameras monitoring and deterring crime, controlled and monitored by a state-funded central command center and the current State Government keeps on investing heavily in security technology and other solutions. In neighborhoods such as Bela Vista, Higienópolis, Auxiliadora, Moinhos de Vento and Petrópolis (the site of Consulate direct-hire housing), static guards oversee main

access points. Larger apartments and commercial sites often employ 24/7 on-site private unarmed security guard services. Although there have been no reports of residential break-ins and burglaries against U.S. employees, residential burglaries pose a constant concern.

In Porto Alegre, the incidence of crime against tourists is greater in areas surrounding the airport, hotels, bars, nightclubs, the Porto Alegre Centro Histórico, public transportation, and other establishments that cater to visitors. It's not recommended to wander in suburban areas of Porto Alegre due to its lack of infrastructure, including unclear road signage, poor cellphone service in some areas, deserted buildings, and higher violent crime rates.

The state of Santa Catarina and its capital, Florianópolis are considered to have some of the lowest crime rates in Brazil, with only 8.9 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2023. The state does face issues such as money laundering and criminal activities at the seaports related to drug trafficking and transporting other illicit goods. The PCC has a small presence in Florianopolis and other main cities such as Joinville and Balneario Camboriu. Disputes between them and the main criminal organization in Santa Catarina, Primeiro Grupo Catarinense (PGC), for territory do occur, including a violent confrontation in late October 2023 between the two groups and police. However, these incidents are rare.

Although violence is rated very low in Santa Catarina State, visitors should still guard against petty theft- specially at beaches and other touristic spots, exercise caution at night, and preferably not display indications of wealth.

Santa Catarina has also one of the highest rates of neo-Nazism in the country, after São Paulo state, and is partially tied to its large German descendant population. Local security authorities have worked to identify and map neo-Nazi cells and supporters.

Recife Consular District

The northeast region of Brazil had the highest average homicide rate when compared to other regions of the country at 30.15 homicides per 100,000 residents. However, some states saw reductions from 2022 to 2023. Piauí saw a 11.3% decline in homicides, Sergipe had a 22% decline, and Rio Grande do Norte state saw a 17% decline as the state has worked to improve security, including in its capital, Natal.

Like many other metropolitan cities in Brazil, crime is a major concern in Recife. All neighborhoods in Recife are susceptible to criminal activity. Tourists and foreigners are frequently targeted by criminals in Recife Antigo (Old Town Recife). The state of Pernambuco, of which Recife is the capital, had the second-highest homicide rate in Brazil in 2023 at 36.78, a 6% increase from 2022. Public security officials reckon that over 70% of homicides in the state are linked to drug trafficking and violent conflicts among rival gangs. Recife registered the fifth-most homicides for any municipality in Brazil in 2023 with 556.

Alagoas state had the third highest homicide rate among Brazilian states with 35 homicides per 100,000 residents in 2023. Maceió, the state capital, registered 394 homicides. The state of

Ceara had a homicide rate of 33 homicides per 100,000 residents for 2023. Its capital, Fortaleza, registered the fourth most homicides among municipalities in Brazil with 715. Maranhão saw a 5% increase in homicides in 2023 with a rate of 25.35.

Rio de Janeiro Consular District

In Rio de Janeiro, violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, carjacking, assault, drugging, and kidnapping are a frequent occurrence. In Zona Sul, opportunistic street crime such as pickpocketing, purse snatching, and smash-and-grab theft from vehicles and storefronts is a constant concern. These acts take place in all areas of the city at any time throughout the year. Major drug gangs and militias control organized crime in Rio de Janeiro, operating mainly in the favelas and in the country's prison system. All of Rio's neighborhoods are subject to criminal activity.

The south and southwest of the city are more common locations for foreign visitors to stay, and host many of the touristic points and tourist infrastructure in the city. Ipanema, Leblon, Urca, Lagoa, Jardim Botânico, Copacabana, Botafogo, Flamengo, and Barra da Tijuca are among neighborhoods where visitors commonly find lodging. However, crime occurs throughout the city, and you should always exercise an increased situational awareness when in public and transiting between destinations.

The city center, or *Centro*, is lower risk to visit during the day. However, it is not recommended to go to the center after dark as it is known to become more unsafe, with a higher risk of mugging and violent crime. The north of the city includes some higher-crime areas that may put visitors at greater risk if they are unfamiliar with the area. The U.S. government includes informal housing developments, commonly referred to as *favelas*, as Level 4: Do Not Travel locations in Brazil.

There has been an increase in roadway violence that is directly attributed to favela police operations. This is most impactful on the road from the Galeão–Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport (GIG) to Zona Sul, along Linha Vermelha. A new tactic has appeared in recent months whereby criminals deliberately shoot at cars and drivers to divert police attention away from arrest operations they may be conducting. Linha Vermelha was shut down at least twice, for an hour or more, in late 2024 due to this kind of activity. This can impact travelers transiting to/from the international airport.

In 2023, the state of Rio de Janeiro had a homicide rate of 22.21. Fifty of the 131 bank robberies carried out nationally occurred in the state, and it saw the highest number of state security personnel killed with 51. The city of Rio de Janeiro registered the largest total number of homicides than any other municipality in Brazil in 2023 with 1,118 murders, a 6.6% increase from 2022, and saw the second most deaths resulting from armed robbery with 26.

Violence escalated in the state of Bahia in 2022-2023 as rival criminal factions, including PCC, CV affiliates, and others engaged in territorial battles, with violence concentrated in Salvador. In 2023, the state of Bahia registered a homicide rate of 32.67 homicides per 100,000 residents.

The state capital, Salvador, had the second highest number of homicides of any municipality in Brazil with 986.

São Paulo Consular District

All neighborhoods in São Paulo are susceptible to crime, including affluent residential sections where government and business leaders reside. Public transportation hubs, hotel sectors, and tourist areas have the highest rates of robbery and theft. The Secretary of Public Security publishes comprehensive crime statistics. In 2023, São Paulo state registered the lowest homicide rate of any state in Brazil at 5.64 homicides per 100,000 – its lowest rate in almost 20 years. However, the state registered the highest number of robberies that ended in homicide than any other state, with 43 in the city of São Paulo alone. Car theft remains a prominent problem in the state of São Paulo. Homicides in São Paulo state in 2024 are on track to be lower than 2023, with an estimated rate of 4.68 homicides per 100,000.

Many visitors to São Paulo stay in the west and southwest of the city. This includes areas near to Avenida Paulista, Jardins, Vila Madelena, Pinheiros, Paraíso, and Bela Vista. International business travelers commonly stay in the Itaim Bibi, Faria Lima, and Berrini areas. Crime, especially non-violent crimes, still occurs in these areas.

The Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay is a regional hub for the transit of illicit goods, including narcotics and firearms. To date, no incidents directed against U.S. citizens have occurred in this area. Visitors to the area, to include Foz de Iguaçu, should remain especially vigilant and maintain a low profile. Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, and São Paulo states contain trafficking routes for marijuana and cocaine.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil.

While Brazilians are most often the targets of kidnapping, foreigners are also vulnerable. Vary routes and times of travel. Household help should not allow anyone to enter the residence without identification and prearranged appointments. Report suspicious persons or activities in the neighborhood to the police immediately. Kidnapping for ransom involving U.S. citizens is rare. Regardless, U.S. businesses often take security precautions for senior executives who are resident in São Paulo and other major cities, arranging significant security measures for high-level visits.

While kidnappings for ransom have become less common in recent years, incidents continue to occur. One tactic of organized gangs is to target individuals observed withdrawing money from ATMs or exiting banks. Using ATMs located in secure locations such as shopping malls or major hotels reduce the chances of criminal targeting.

Another version of this is express kidnapping, an ongoing criminal activity in which kidnappers take ATM users at gunpoint and take them to several ATMs to withdraw cash. Criminals have also utilized banking applications when carrying express kidnappings, forcing victims to open their banks apps and transfer funds. This has primarily been used with the local banking application Pix. While Brazilians are the most frequent targets, foreigners are also vulnerable to this crime.

It is also advised to park vehicles in garages and other well lighted/guarded areas, since criminals will often confront victims upon entry into their vehicles. Limit the amount of bank/credit cards in your wallet to limit the potential loss and duration of the incident.

“Virtual kidnapping” scams also occur with some frequency, particularly targeting business leaders. These incidents often involve allegations that the business leader’s family member has been kidnapped, and demand a ransom. Usually these incidents involve smaller amounts, with demands for expediency (before it is discovered that the alleged kidnapping victim is not actually kidnapped.)

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Brasília, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo as **LOW**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil.

Brazil is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not the target of any known radical groups. Though there are no known indigenous terrorist groups operating in Brazil, several al-Qa’ida members or sympathizers operate in the country. Concerns exist regarding the facilitation of transfers of money and people for terrorist organizations.

While organized terrorism may not be as pronounced of a threat in Brazil, lone wolf terrorist attacks have gained momentum. School shootings have become more prevalent in Brazil over the past few years. Since 2019, Brazil has experienced 17 school attacks that have led to the deaths of 26 people.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo as being **MEDIUM**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. The U.S. Department of State has assessed Recife as being a **LOW**-threat location for political violence.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting

logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Political violence is possible in any of the major cities of Brazil, but generally uncommon. Economic conditions in Brazil have the potential to contribute to civil unrest, protests, and strikes.

Extremist groups occasionally conduct acts of civil disobedience and may conduct violent confrontations with police. There have been political protests in the past year throughout the country.

Elections/Political Stability

Nationwide municipal elections were held in October 2024 and were considered free and fair. However, the 2024 election campaign did register a record number of cases of political violence in Brazil. There were at least 338 episodes from July to September 2024, according to a survey by the Electoral Investigation Group of the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

General elections were last held on October 2, 2022, to elect the president, vice-president, and many other political offices. The presidential election was extremely close with current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, or simply Lula, defeating the then incumbent Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro made several allegations of election fraud and requested that the Superior Electoral Court invalidate the votes recorded by electronic voting machines that lacked identification numbers. The court rejected the request. On January 8, 2023, pro-Bolsonaro protestors unsuccessfully stormed the offices of the National Congress, the Presidential Palace, and the Supreme Federal Court seeking to violently overthrow the democratically elected Lula. Bolsonaro was subsequently barred from running for office until 2030.

There has been increased polarization between right and left-wing supporters in recent years, with increased concerns of partisan violence. Polarization has resulted in more protests split along ideological lines. Protestors and counter-protestors often demonstrate on issues such as human rights, the right to bear arms, labor laws, and social security system reform. These demonstrations are sometimes violent.

The next general election in Brazil is scheduled to occur in October 2026.

Protests & Demonstrations

São Paulo hosts public demonstrations periodically. Frequent calls for strikes remain a constant concern. São Paulo continues to experience strikes originating from the public transportation, petroleum, postal, and education sectors. Most protests in São Paulo occur on Avenida Paulista (near the *Museu de Arte de São Paulo*, or MASP) or in or around Praça da Sé (See Square).

The vast majority of these are peaceful, but some develop into violence, resulting in disturbances, property damage, and confrontation between protestors and opposing groups and/or police. Some protestors in Brazil use black bloc tactics. Their mission is to infiltrate otherwise peaceful demonstrations to cause chaos and violence between police forces and protestors. Their tactics involve total face coverage.

In Rio de Janeiro protests often occur in the city center, which includes many other government and cultural buildings. These may occur near Praça Floriano and along the broad Avenida Presidente Vargas. Occasionally, demonstrations are organized along Copacabana's Avenida Atlântica.

In Brasília and other cities, protests over inflation, living conditions, and labor relations are common. While most demonstrations remain peaceful and well controlled by local authorities, acts of violence and confrontation with police occurs. Protests can form with little notice, and often result in clashes with police, deployment of tear gas, and destruction of property, to include burning city buses and attacking private business establishments. Within the Federal District, most protests and demonstrations take place in the city's large, open public Esplanada area.

In the past several years, Brazilians, political parties, and social organizations have used major international and national events as a platform to voice discontent with the Brazilian government.

In 2018, a massive nationwide strike by truck driver unions protesting diesel fuel prices, tolls, and the need for tax reform paralyzed roads, causing nationwide shortages of food, medicine, and oil.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Most Brazilians regard U.S. nationals in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners.

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement and Emergency Contact Information:

- Civil Police Emergency Line: **197**
- Federal Police: **194**
- Military Police: **190**
- Federal Highway Patrol: **191**
- State Highway Patrol: **198**

The three national police forces—the Federal Police, Federal Highway Police, and Federal Railway Police—have domestic security responsibilities and report to the Justice Ministry.

Federal Police (*Polícia Federal*, DPF): Responsible for crimes against federal institutions, to include international drug trafficking, terrorism, cyber-crime, organized crime, public

corruption, white-collar crime, money laundering, immigration, border control, airport security, and maritime policing.

Federal Highway Police (*Polícia Rodoviária Federal, PRF*): Brazil's federal highway patrol is principally tasked with combatting crime on Brazil's federal roads and highways, as well as monitoring and enforcing traffic laws. They may also perform emergency response. Federal roadways are designated with a "BR."

There are two distinct units within each state's police forces:

- **Civil Police (*Polícia Civil*):** They carry out criminal investigations, gather evidence, execute warrants, operate police stations (*delegacias*) where crimes are reported and processed. They focus on complex crimes like fraud, homicide, drug trafficking, and organized crime.
- **Military Police (*Polícia Militar*):** They are tasked with maintaining law and order. They conduct patrols, deter criminal activity, provide immediate response to emergencies and disturbances, conduct traffic enforcement, and crowd control. Despite the name, military police forces do not report to the Defense Ministry. They are the Brazilian equivalent of U.S. uniformed state police officers, deploying solely to respond to or act as a deterrent against the commission of crime.

The armed forces also have some domestic security responsibilities and report to the Defense Ministry.

Police Response

Local police are generally well equipped and responsive to requests for assistance from U.S. and other foreign visitors. However, disparities do exist across Brazil's 27 states in terms of response capability and law enforcement resources for public security.

Civilian authorities have at times not maintained effective control over security forces. Members of the security forces have committed numerous abuses. From 2018-2023 police-involved shootings resulted in over 6,000 civilian deaths nationwide in 2023, with Bahia and Rio de Janeiro seeing the largest number of victims.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Brazil, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Brazil.

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and limits arrests to those caught in the act of committing a crime or called for by order of a judicial authority; however, police at times did not respect this prohibition. The law provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government generally observes this provision.

The law provides criminal penalties for conviction of corruption by officials and stipulates civil penalties for corruption committed by Brazilian citizens or entities overseas. There have been numerous reports of corruption at various levels of government, and delays in judicial proceedings against persons accused of corruption were common, often due to constitutional protections from prosecution for elected officials. This often resulted in de facto impunity for those responsible.

Brazil embraces a robust and energetic press system that is often critical of the government. The Brazilian press has been successful in the past in uncovering and reporting corruption. Several past high ranking Government officials have gone to prison as the result of investigative reporting.

Cybersecurity

Brazil is one of Latin America’s leading digital nations. Approximately 84% of Brazilians are active internet users, with 8 out of 10 active on social media. Brazilian financial institutions were early pioneers of online services, and continue to invest heavily in evolving IT security solutions. Next-generation biometric identity technologies are common features in Brazil’s consumer banking sectors. Nevertheless, cybersecurity and online fraud are persistent concerns, with annual losses reaching billions of dollars. Hacktivists have defaced government websites and taken them offline in recent years.

Brazil continues to rank as one of the most pervasive cybercrime environments in the world. Brazilian cybercriminals have grown more brazen despite new legislation and official efforts to stop malicious activity online. The banking sector has been the primary target of these operations; however, cybercrime in Brazil also affects daily Internet users, private-sector organizations, and short-term travelers. Maintain awareness of popular schemes to avoid becoming a cybercrime victim.

Import/Export Restrictions

Brazilian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporarily importing or exporting items such as firearms, ammunition, antiquities, mineral samples, tropical plants, wildlife, medications, and business and communication equipment. There are no known issues with bringing in satellite phones.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).

Exhibit 4

Terrorist Designation of Comando Vermelho and Primeiro Comando da Capital

 state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/05/terrorist-designation-of-comando-vermelho-and-primeiro-comando-da-capital



STATEMENT BY Secretary of State Marco Rubio

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Press Statement

[Marco Rubio, Secretary of State](#)

May 28, 2026

Today, the U.S. Department of State is designating Comando Vermelho (CV) and Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) and intends to designate both groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), effective June 5, 2026.

CV and PCC are two of the most violent criminal organizations in Brazil. Together, they command thousands of members and have orchestrated brutal attacks against Brazilian police officers, public officials, and civilians. Their influence and illicit networks extend far beyond Brazil's borders, across our region and into our country.

The Trump Administration will continue to use all available tools to protect our nation and our national security interests by keeping illicit drugs off our streets and disrupting the revenue streams funding violent narco-terrorists. Today's action taken by the State Department further

demonstrates the Trump Administration's unwavering commitment to dismantling cartels and criminal organizations in our region and ensuring the safety of the American people.

Today's actions are taken pursuant to section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and Executive Order 13224. FTO designations go into effect upon publication in the Federal Register.

Exhibit 5



Brazilian
Yearbook
of Public
Security
2025



FÓRUM BRASILEIRO DE
SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA



A636	Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security / Brazilian Public Security Forum. – 1. 2006 - . – São Paulo: FBSP (Brazilian Forum on Public Security), 2025. 434 p.: il.
Annually. Year 19 (2025). ISSN: 1983-7364	
1. Brazilian Public Security Yearbook. 2. Public security - Statistics – Brazil. 3. Violence – Statistics – Brazil. 4. Individual rights and guarantees – Brazil. I. Brazilian Forum on Public Security.	
CDD 303.6	

Cataloging sheet prepared by Ione Maria Ferreira Rodrigues – CRB (Regional Council of Librarianship) 8/9555

How to reference

BRAZILIAN FORUM ON PUBLIC SECURITY. 19th Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security. São Paulo: Brazilian Forum on Public Security, 2025. Available at: <https://publicacoes.forumseguranca.org.br/handle/123456789/279>. Accessed on:

Increase in Missing Persons May Obscure Executions and Forced Disappearances

Samira Bueno

Executive Director of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP) and has a PhD in Public Administration and Government, FGV-SP

Beatriz Schroeder

Researcher at the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP) and has a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration, FGV-SP

Isabela Sobral

Supervisor of the Data Unit at the Brazilian Forum on Public Security and has a Master's Degree in Public Administration and Government, FGV EAESP

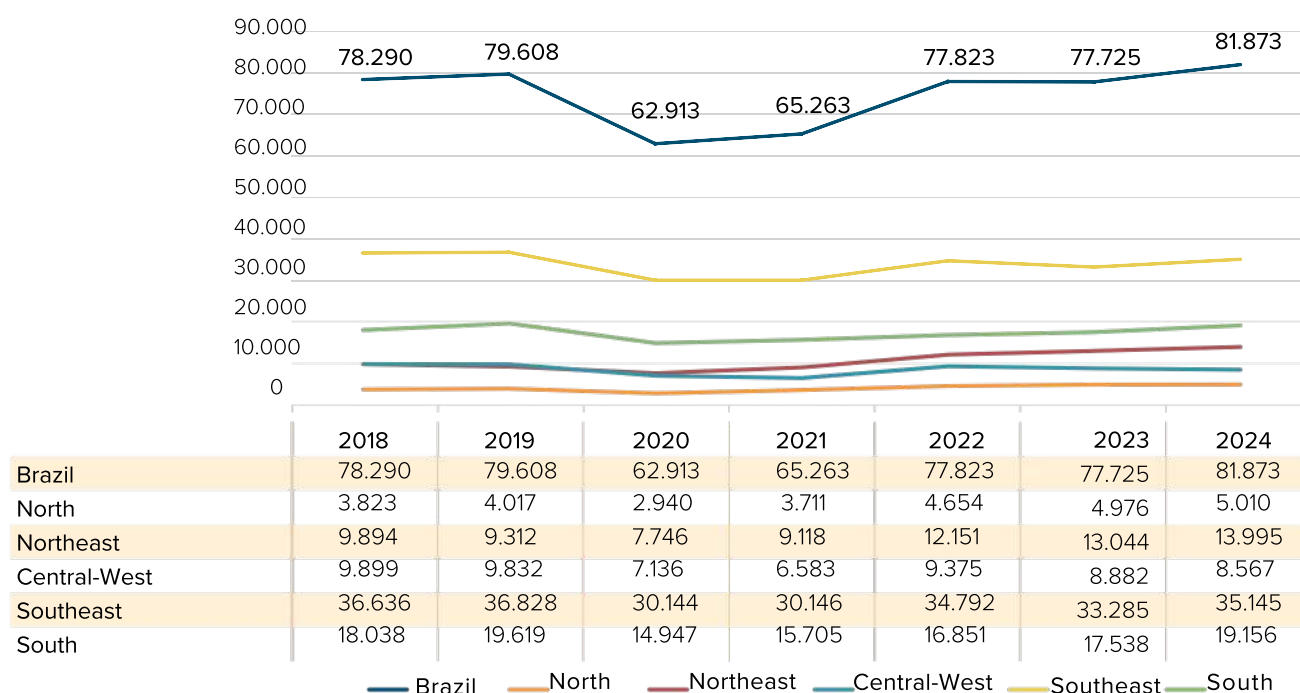
The rate of reported missing persons increased by 4.9% in Brazil in 2024, totaling 81,873 cases reported to Civil Police authorities nationwide. After a sharp decline in 2020 and 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic period, the number of reports began to rise again, reaching, in the most recent year, the highest figure since 2018. **Based on recent statistics, an average of four missing persons reports per hour were filed with law enforcement authorities.**

An analysis of regional variation between 2018 and 2024 indicates that the Northeast and North regions recorded the largest increases during the period, at 41.4% and 31.0%, respectively. The Southern region also experienced an increase of 6.2%, while the Southeast region registered a decrease of 4.1%, and the Central-West region, a decrease of 13.5%.

CHART 26

Missing Persons Reports

Brazil and Regions, 2018–2024



Source: State Secretariats of Public Security and/or Social Defense; Rio de Janeiro Public Security Institute (ISP); Civil Police of the Federal District; Civil Police of the State of Roraima; Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) – Population Projections for Brazil and its Federative Units; Brazilian Forum on Public Security.

The increase in missing persons in Brazil coincides with a period in which a significant decline in intentional violent deaths has been observed, alongside the expansion of criminal organizations such as the PCC - First Capital Command (*Primeiro Comando da Capital*) and the Red Command (*Comando Vermelho*). Following conflicts stemming from internal splits in previous years, these groups began consolidating new territories in partnership with local criminal organizations. It is therefore noteworthy that the states currently located in the most violent regions of the country also present the largest increases in the number of missing persons during the period analyzed.

The states located in the most violent regions of the country currently also present the largest increases in the number of missing persons during the period analyzed.

In 2024, the states that recorded the highest increases in missing persons rates were Amapá (+27%), Sergipe (+19.9%), and Bahia (+14.8%). These same states also stood out during the same period for reductions in intentional violent deaths. However, these territories are marked by intense disputes among criminal organizations for control of drug trafficking and by high levels of police lethality, which raises the hypothesis that part of the violence in these contexts may be concealed in the form of disappearances.

In light of this context, the analysis of the reduction in intentional violent deaths must be qualified by the growth in disappearances, acknowledging that official lethal violence rates may be underestimated due to the practice of disposing of the bodies of execution victims.

This phenomenon, moreover, is not new in Brazil. Since at least the period of the military dictatorship, the existence of clandestine cemeteries used for the disposal of bodies has been documented. In 1990, the country became aware of a clandestine cemetery in São Paulo, created by state agents during the military regime for the disposal of the remains of victims of political repression and of death squads formed by police officers. In the Perus mass grave, as it became known, 1,049 bags containing skeletal remains were found.¹

Even during the democratic period, the practice of disposing of the bodies of executed individuals in clandestine graves has persisted, although research on the subject remains scarce. This practice has been primarily adopted by criminal factions and militias as a means of eliminating rivals without drawing the attention of the State. If there is no body, there is no crime, nor an investigation.

Most of these individuals end up appearing in the statistics as “missing persons,” which is considered by the police to be an atypical occurrence, that is, not a crime. And since it does not constitute, a priori, a criminal offense, this type of

¹ Perus Mass Grave: The clandestine cemetery where the military dictatorship hid the remains of victims of repression. Available at: <https://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/blog-do-acervo/post/vala-de-perus-descoberta-do-cemiterio-clandestino-onde-foram-enterradas-vitimas-da-ditadura.html>

The legal classification of disappearance is relatively recent in Brazil. It was only with the enactment of Law No. 13,812, of March 16, 2019, that a legal concept for the disappearance of a person was formally established.

report frequently does not result in the opening of a police investigation, lacks material evidence, and is not subject to statutes of limitation (Ferreira, 2013).²

The legal classification of disappearance is relatively recent in Brazil. It was only with the enactment of Law No. 13,812, of March 16, 2019, that the legal concept of a missing person was defined as: “any human being whose whereabouts are unknown, regardless of the cause of the disappearance, until their recovery and identification have been confirmed through physical or scientific means.”

Experts on the subject argue, however, that although the law represents an advance, it is excessively vague, as it does not differentiate among types of disappearance. The public prosecutor of the State of São Paulo, Eliana Vendramini,³ argues in her doctoral dissertation that disappearances should be classified into three types: voluntary disappearance, in which an adult individual voluntarily distances themselves from family and friends; involuntary disappearance, in which a person leaves or is removed by third parties without the ability to signal the event, due to incapacity, accidents, or natural disasters; and forced disappearance, in which a person, whether capable or not, is forcibly removed through violence or threat (Carneiro, 2022⁴; Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP), 2023⁵).

In December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly approved the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which is defined under international law as a crime against humanity, and whose text entered into force in 2010. Although Brazil is a signatory to the UN Convention⁶, as well as to the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons⁷, the country still lacks domestic legislation formally classifying the offense as a crime.

Data from the Missing Persons Map in Brazil, produced by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security, show that the profile of missing persons is predominantly composed of men (62.8%), adolescents and young people (53.5%), and Black individuals (54.3%), who disappear primarily between Friday and Sunday—the same profile observed among homicide victims.

² FERREIRA, Letícia Carvalho de Mesquita. From a family problem to a social problem: ethnographic notes on missing persons in contemporary Brazil. *Anuário Antropológico* [online], vol. 38, no. 1, 2013.

³ CARNEIRO, Eliana Faleiros Vendramini. Missing persons: a critical analysis of the State's criminal policy. 2022. 155 p. Doctoral Dissertation (PhD in Law) – Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), São Paulo, 2022. Available at: <https://tede2.pucsp.br/handle/handle/30904>. Accessed on April 23, 2024.

⁴ CARNEIRO, Eliana Vendramini. Missing persons: a critical analysis of the State's criminal policy. Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. Doctoral Dissertation. São Paulo, 2022.

⁵ Brazilian Forum on Public Security. Map of Missing Persons in Brazil. Available at: <https://publicacoes.forumseguranca.org.br/server/api/core/bitstreams/91de3f95-67de-410a-9fb7-ce0227d248cb/content>

⁶ Regulated by Decree No. 8,767, of May 11, 2016. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2016/decreto/d8767.htm

⁷ Regulated by Decree No. 8,766, of May 11, 2016. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2016/decreto/d8766.htm

A brief Google search indicates the existence of clandestine cemeteries used for the disposal of bodies by criminal organizations in cities across several Brazilian states, including Mato Grosso⁸, Bahia⁹, Rio Grande do Sul¹⁰, Pará¹¹, São Paulo¹², Rio de Janeiro¹³, and Ceará¹⁴, among others. Not by coincidence, a recent study conducted by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security in partnership with Datafolha, entitled Victimization and Perception of Violence and Public Security Survey¹⁵, found that between July 2023 and June 2024, an average of 8% of the Brazilian population aged 16 years or older reported having knowledge of the existence of “clandestine cemeteries” in the cities where they lived. In 2024, this figure corresponded to approximately 14.2 million people. According to the same survey, this percentage is even more significant among residents of state capitals and municipalities with more than 500,000 inhabitants, where 17% of residents reported knowing of illegal cemeteries. In light of the significant increase in missing persons reports in Brazil, particularly in regions marked by high homicide rates and disputes among criminal organizations, it is urgent to recognize that this dynamic may be concealing an even more perverse dimension of criminality: execution followed by concealment of the body. The absence of specific legislation defining forced disappearance as a crime hampers the institutional response to the problem, contributing to the invisibilization of victims and to the suffering of families who are deprived even of the possibility of mourning. The approval of Bill No. 6,240/2013, which has been pending in the National Congress for more than a decade and classifies forced disappearance as a criminal offense, including it among heinous crimes, is an indispensable measure to break with the normalization of disappearances and to ensure the right to memory, truth, and justice.

In light of the significant growth in missing persons records in Brazil, especially in regions marked by high homicide rates and disputes among criminal organizations, it becomes urgent to acknowledge that this dynamic may be concealing an even more perverse form of criminality: execution followed by the concealment of the corpse.

8 <https://record.r7.com/cidade-alerta/policia-encontra-cemiterio-clandestino-de-facciao-criminosa-no-mato-grosso-23112023/>

9 <https://noticias.r7.com/bahia/balanco-geral-ba/balanco-geral-especial/videos/exclusivo-descobertas-ossadas-em-cemiterio-clandestino-em-simoes-filho-ba-31032018/>

10 <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/noticia/2019/08/22/cemiterio-clandestino-em-porto-alegre-teria-cerca-de-100-corpos-enterrados-segundo-mp.ghtml>

11 <https://www.oliberal.com/policia/cemiterio-clandestino-e-encontrado-em-ananindeua-tres-corpos-1.397692>

12 <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/sudeste/sp/cemiterio-clandestino-em-sao-paulo-pelo-menos-14-ossadas-sao-encontradas/>

13 <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2025/07/14/policia-encontra-cemiterio-clandestino.ghtml>

14 <https://g1.globo.com/ce/ceara/noticia/2020/10/30/policia-investiga-cemiterio-clandestino-utilizado-por-facciao-criminosa-para-torturar-e-enterrar-rivais-em-fortaleza.ghtml>

15 <https://publicacoes.forumseguranca.org.br/items/a8c9bf9d-848d-46ca-ba35-28e840b9914d>

I, Marina Viana Silva, telephone number 415 425-2508, mailing address P.O. Box 90487, San Diego, CA 92169, certify that I have performed the professional translation of this document from Portuguese to English, as a qualified translator fluent in both languages, and that the following is an accurate and complete translation of the document.

Marina Viana

Date: January 28, 2026



Anuário
Brasileiro
de Segurança
Pública
2025



FÓRUM BRASILEIRO DE
SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA

A636 Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública / Fórum Brasileiro de
Segurança Pública. – 1. 2006 - . – São Paulo: FBSP, 2025.
434 p.: il.

Anual.
Ano 19 (2025).
ISSN: 1983-7364

1. Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. 2. Segurança pública –
Estatística – Brasil. 3. Violência – Estatística – Brasil. 4. Direitos e
garantias individuais – Brasil. I. Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública.

CDD 303.6

Ficha catalográfica elaborada por Ione Maria Ferreira Rodrigues – CRB 8/9555

Como referenciar:

FÓRUM BRASILEIRO DE SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA. **19º Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública.**
São Paulo: Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2025. Disponível em: <https://publicacoes.forumseguranca.org.br/handle/123456789/279>. Acesso em:

Crescimento dos desaparecimentos pode invisibilizar execuções e desaparecimentos forçados

Samira Bueno
Diretora-executiva do Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (FBSP) e Doutora em Administração Pública e Governo pela FGV-SP

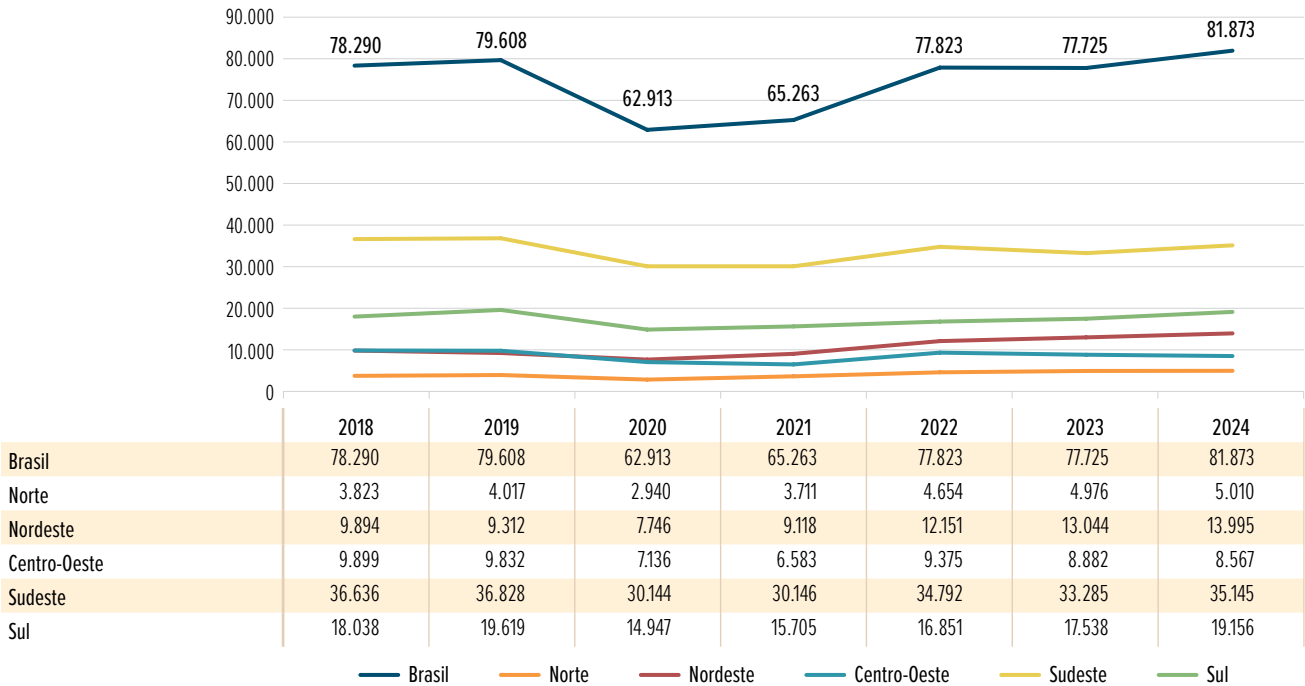
Beatriz Schroeder
Pesquisadora do Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (FBSP) e Graduada em Administração Pública pela FGV-SP

Isabela Sobral
Supervisora do Núcleo de Dados do Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública e Mestre em Administração Pública e Governo pela FGV EAESP

A taxa de registros de desaparecimentos cresceu 4,9% no Brasil em 2024, totalizando 81.873 casos notificados às Polícias Cíveis de todo o país. Após uma queda acentuada nos anos de 2020 e 2021, período da pandemia de Covid-19, os registros voltaram a subir, atingindo, no último ano, o maior número desde 2018. Considerando as estatísticas recentes, **foram realizadas, em média, quatro notificações de desaparecimento por hora às autoridades policiais.**

A análise da variação por região entre 2018 e 2024 indica que as regiões Nordeste e Norte apresentaram os maiores crescimentos no período, de 41,4% e 31,0%, respectivamente. A região Sul também registrou aumento, de 6,2%, enquanto a Sudeste teve queda de 4,1% e a Centro-Oeste, de 13,5%.

GRÁFICO 26
Registros de Desaparecidos
Brasil e regiões, 2018-2024



Fonte: Secretarias Estaduais de Segurança Pública e/ou Defesa Social; Instituto de Segurança Pública/RJ (ISP); Polícia Civil do Distrito Federal; Polícia Civil do Estado de Roraima; Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) – Projeções da População do Brasil e das Unidades da Federação; Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública.

O crescimento dos desaparecimentos no Brasil coincide com o período em que vimos um declínio significativo das mortes violentas intencionais, mas também um movimento de expansão de organizações criminosas como o PCC e o Comando Vermelho, que após os conflitos gerados pelo racha em anos anteriores, passaram a consolidar novos territórios em parceria com organizações criminosas locais. Chama atenção, portanto, que justamente os estados das regiões mais violentas do país hoje, apresentam também os maiores crescimentos no número de desaparecimentos no período analisado.

Os estados das regiões mais violentas do país hoje, apresentam também os maiores crescimentos no número de desaparecimentos no período analisado.

Em 2024, os estados que registraram os maiores aumentos nas taxas de desaparecimentos foram o Amapá (+27%), Sergipe (+19,9%) e Bahia (+14,8%). Esses mesmos estados também se destacaram, no mesmo período, pela redução nas mortes violentas intencionais. Trata-se, no entanto, de territórios marcados por intensas disputas entre organizações criminosas pelo controle do tráfico de drogas e por elevadas taxas de letalidade policial, o que levanta a hipótese de que parte da violência nesses contextos esteja sendo ocultada sob a forma de desaparecimentos.

Diante deste contexto, a análise da redução das mortes violentas intencionais precisa ser matizada pelo crescimento dos desaparecimentos, reconhecendo que as taxas de violência letal oficiais podem estar subestimadas pela prática de descarte de corpos de vítimas de execução.

Esse fenômeno, aliás, não é novidade no Brasil. Ao menos desde a ditadura militar, sabe-se da existência de cemitérios clandestinos para a desova de corpos. Em 1990, o país tomou conhecimento de um cemitério clandestino em São Paulo, criado por agentes do Estado durante o regime militar para o descarte dos restos mortais de vítimas da repressão e de esquadrões da morte formados por policiais. Na vala de Perus, como ficou conhecido, foram encontrados 1.049 sacos com ossadas¹.

Mesmo durante o período democrático, a prática de descartar corpos de pessoas executadas em valas clandestinas se manteve, embora as pesquisas sobre o tema sejam escassas. Esta prática foi incorporada principalmente por facções criminosas e milícias como forma de eliminar rivais sem chamar a atenção do Estado. Se não há corpo, não há crime e tampouco uma investigação.

A maioria dessas pessoas acaba figurando nas estatísticas de “desaparecidos”, o que é considerado pelas polícias como um fato atípico, ou seja, não se trata de um crime. E como não constitui, a priori, um delito, esse tipo de ocorrência frequentemente não resul-

¹ Vala de Perus: O cemitério clandestino onde a ditadura militar escondeu as ossadas de vítimas da repressão. Disponível em <https://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/blog-do-acervo/post/vala-de-perus-descoberta-do-cemiterio-clandestino-onde-foram-enterradas-vitimas-da-ditadura.html>

A tipificação jurídica de desaparecimento é bastante recente no Brasil. Foi apenas com a aprovação da lei 13.812, de 16 de março de 2019, que se estabeleceu o conceito jurídico para o desaparecimento de uma pessoa.

ta em abertura de inquérito policial, não possui materialidade e tampouco está sujeito à prescrição (Ferreira, 2013²).

A tipificação jurídica de desaparecimento é bastante recente no Brasil. Foi apenas com a aprovação da lei 13.812, de 16 de março de 2019, que se estabeleceu o conceito jurídico para o desaparecimento de uma pessoa: “todo ser humano cujo paradeiro é desconhecido, não importando a causa de seu desaparecimento, até que sua recuperação e identificação tenham sido confirmadas por vias físicas ou científicas”.

Especialistas no tema, no entanto, argumentam que embora a lei represente um avanço, foi excessivamente vaga ao não diferenciar os tipos de desaparecimento. A promotora de justiça do Estado de São Paulo, Eliana Vendramini³, defende em sua tese de doutorado que os desaparecimentos sejam diferenciados em três tipos: o desaparecimento voluntário, em que um indivíduo maior de idade se afasta voluntariamente de familiares e amigos; o desaparecimento involuntário, em que a pessoa se afasta ou é afastada por terceiros sem dispor de condições para sinalizar a ação, por ser incapaz ou ainda por acidentes e desastres naturais; e o desaparecimento forçado, em que a pessoa, seja ela capaz ou não, é afastada forçadamente por violência ou ameaça (Carneiro, 2022⁴; FBSP, 2023⁵).

Em dezembro de 2006 a Assembleia das Nações Unidas aprovou a Convenção Internacional para a Proteção de todas as pessoas contra o desaparecimento forçado, definido pelo direito internacional como crime contra a humanidade e cujo texto entrou em vigor em 2010. Embora o Brasil seja um dos países signatários da Convenção da ONU⁶, assim como da Convenção Interamericana sobre o Desaparecimento Forçado de Pessoas⁷, até o momento não conta com legislação para a tipificação do crime.

Dados do Mapa dos Desaparecidos no Brasil, produzido pelo Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, mostram que o perfil da pessoa desaparecida é marcado basicamente por homens (62,8%), adolescentes e jovens (53,5%), negros (54,3%), que desaparecem entre sexta e domingo – o mesmo perfil das vítimas de homicídio.

2 FERREIRA, Letícia Carvalho de Mesquita. De problema de família a problema social: notas etnográficas sobre o desaparecimento de pessoas no Brasil contemporâneo. Anuário Antropológico [online], v. 38, n. 1, 2013.

3 CARNEIRO, Eliana Faleiros Vendramini. Pessoas desaparecidas: uma análise crítica sobre a política criminal do Estado. 2022. 155 f. Tese (Doutorado em Direito) – Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2022. Disponível em: <https://tede2.pucsp.br/handle/handle/30904>. Acesso em: 23 abr. 2024.

4 CARNEIRO, Eliana Vendramini. Pessoas desaparecidas: uma análise crítica sobre a política criminal do Estado. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo. Tese de Doutorado. São Paulo, 2022.

5 Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. Mapa dos desaparecidos no Brasil. Disponível em: <https://publicacoes.forumseguranca.org.br/server/api/core/bitstreams/91de3f95-67de-410a-9fb7-ce0227d248cb/content>

6 Regulamentado através do Decreto 8.767, de 11 de maio de 2016. Disponível em: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2016/decreto/d8767.htm

7 Regulamentada através do Decreto 8.766, de 11 de maio de 2016. Disponível em https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2016/decreto/d8766.htm

Uma rápida busca no Google indica a existência de cemitérios clandestinos para a deposição de corpos por organizações criminosas em cidades dos estados do Mato Grosso⁸, Bahia⁹, Rio Grande do Sul¹⁰, Pará¹¹, São Paulo¹², Rio de Janeiro¹³, Ceará¹⁴, dentre outros. Não à toa, pesquisa recente do Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública e do Datafolha, intitulada Pesquisa de Vitimização e Percepção sobre Violência e Segurança Pública¹⁵, apontou que, entre julho de 2023 e junho de 2024, 8% da população brasileira com 16 anos de idade ou mais, em média, declarou que tinha conhecimento da existência de “cemitérios clandestinos” nas cidades em que moravam. Isso equivalia, em 2024, a cerca de 14,2 milhões de pessoas. Ainda segundo a pesquisa, esse percentual é ainda mais significativo entre os moradores de capitais e entre moradores de municípios com mais de 500 mil habitantes, quando 17% dos residentes nessas localidades declararam conhecer cemitérios ilegais. Diante do crescimento expressivo dos registros de desaparecimentos no Brasil, especialmente em regiões marcadas por elevadas taxas de homicídio e por disputas de organizações criminosas, torna-se urgente reconhecer que essa dinâmica pode estar ocultando uma face ainda mais perversa da criminalidade: a execução seguida da ocultação de cadáver. A ausência de uma legislação específica que tipifique o desaparecimento forçado como crime dificulta o enfrentamento institucional ao problema, contribuindo para a invisibilização das vítimas e para o sofrimento das famílias que, sequer, tem a possibilidade de enfrentar o luto. Aprovar o PL 6.240/2013, que tramita há mais de uma década no Congresso Nacional e tipifica o crime de desaparecimento forçado, incluindo-o como crime hediondo, é medida indispensável para romper com a naturalização do desaparecimento e assegurar o direito à memória, à verdade e à justiça.

Diante do crescimento expressivo dos registros de desaparecimentos no Brasil, especialmente em regiões marcadas por elevadas taxas de homicídio e por disputas de organizações criminosas, torna-se urgente reconhecer que essa dinâmica pode estar ocultando uma face ainda mais perversa da criminalidade: a execução seguida da ocultação de cadáver.

8 <https://record.r7.com/cidade-alerta/policia-encontra-cemiterio-clandestino-de-facciao-criminosa-no-mato-grosso-23112023/>

9 <https://noticias.r7.com/bahia/balanco-geral-ba/balanco-geral-especial/videos/exclusivo-descobertas-ossadas-em-cemiterio-clandestino-em-simoes-filho-ba-31032018/>

10 <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/noticia/2019/08/22/cemiterio-clandestino-em-porto-alegre-teria-cerca-de-100-corpos-enterrados-segundo-mp.ghtml>

11 <https://www.oliberal.com/policia/cemiterio-clandestino-e-encontrado-em-ananindeua-tres-corpos-1.397692>

12 <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/sudeste/sp/cemiterio-clandestino-em-sao-paulo-pelo-menos-14-ossadas-sao-encontradas/>

13 <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2025/07/14/policia-encontra-cemiterio-clandestino.ghtml>

14 <https://g1.globo.com/ce/ceara/noticia/2020/10/30/policia-investiga-cemiterio-clandestino-utilizado-por-facciao-criminosa-para-torturar-e-enterrar-rivais-em-fortaleza.ghtml>

15 <https://publicacoes.forumseguranca.org.br/items/a8cdbf9d-848d-46ca-ba35-28e840b9914d>

Exhibit 6

State of denial?

 globalinitiative.net/analysis/organized-crime-is-driving-a-deadly-surge-in-violence-in-brazil

July 14, 2025

Organized crime is driving a deadly surge in violence in Brazil, taking advantage of public security failures

Violence in Brazil's northern and north-eastern regions is a growing concern. In 2023, the homicide rate in northern Brazil was 41.5% [higher](#) than the national average. Meanwhile, six of the 10 cities with the highest homicide rates in the country in 2023 were in the north-eastern state of [Bahia](#). Rising insecurity in these regions has been driven by the country's two mafia-style groups, Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and Comando Vermelho (CV), moving into these areas.

The Brazilian government is seeking to address this violence by proposing a constitutional amendment to reform public security. The bill, which is currently being [debated](#) in congress, aims to standardize police operational strategies and codes of conduct across Brazil's 27 states to bolster enforcement efforts against organized crime.

Alongside this proposal, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration suggested launching a pilot programme in Bahia in December 2024 to address the state's public security crisis. The programme would provide local law enforcement with federal intelligence and technical guidance from academic researchers to help them displace criminal networks from their territories. However, the Bahia state government [refused](#) federal assistance on the grounds that organized crime is not the main public security problem in the state, a justification that is not backed up by existing data. The evidence shows that criminal networks are potent and highly time-sensitive drivers of lethal violence in Bahia and Brazil more broadly.

Organized crime moves north

In the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index ('the Index'), Brazil's mafia-style group indicator [score](#) was 8 out of 10, placing the country second in South America, after Colombia and Venezuela (9.5), for this category of criminal actor. These large criminal groups from the south-eastern region of Brazil have increased their footprint across the country with two goals in mind: establishing new routes for transnational drug exports and diversifying their revenue streams into other profitable illicit trades, including wildlife trafficking and illicit gold mining in the resource-rich Amazon region, and extortion and protection racketeering in densely populated urban margins.

At the core of the expansion of the PCC and the CV is their willingness to cooperate with smaller, local criminal networks. In exchange for allowing the PCC and CV to move into their turfs, these smaller groups [receive](#) weapons and cash. This support has empowered the local groups, which were previously limited to low-level drug retailing, to govern communities, influence public security and confront the state. Compared to the 2021 iteration, the 2023 Index saw an increase of 0.5 points for criminal networks in Brazil, placing the country well above the global average.

Rising criminal violence in Bahia illustrates concerning trends regarding organized crime's capacity to shape public security in Brazil, and government responses to this violence exemplify the institutional shortfalls Brazil faces when tackling organized crime. Bahia is the fourth most populous state in Brazil, with a population of over 14 million, and its coastal capital, Salvador, is one of the country's main [hubs](#) for drug exports to West Africa and Europe. There are 21 criminal organizations operating in Bahia – approximately 23% of the illicit entities mapped [nationwide](#). Lethal police crackdowns have dramatically increased in tandem with the rise in criminality in the state: between 2019 and 2022, killings by police in the state doubled, reaching 1 464 [victims](#) per year.

Under the Index, Brazil ranks 18th out of 35 countries in the Americas for overall resilience indicators against organized crime (scoring 4.92 out of 10). This low resilience score is due to difficulties in implementing anti-organized crime policies at a national level. Indeed, the 2023 Index gave Brazil a score of 4.5 out of 10 for national policies and laws that can effectively combat organized crime, and the same score was given to law enforcement capacity. With state governments controlling police forces, the federal government has its hands tied and has largely been unable to coordinate effective public security solutions to rising criminality.

As evidenced by the increase in police lethality in Bahia, the response by local governments has been to allocate resources to militarized policing rather than strengthening investigative capacity. They also [neglect](#) to coordinate public security strategies or share best anti-crime practices with other states. Mafia-style groups and criminal networks have exploited this fragmented policy landscape and institutional shortcomings to expand into new territories and invest in various licit and illicit markets with minimal resistance from government institutions.

Insights from gang conflict data

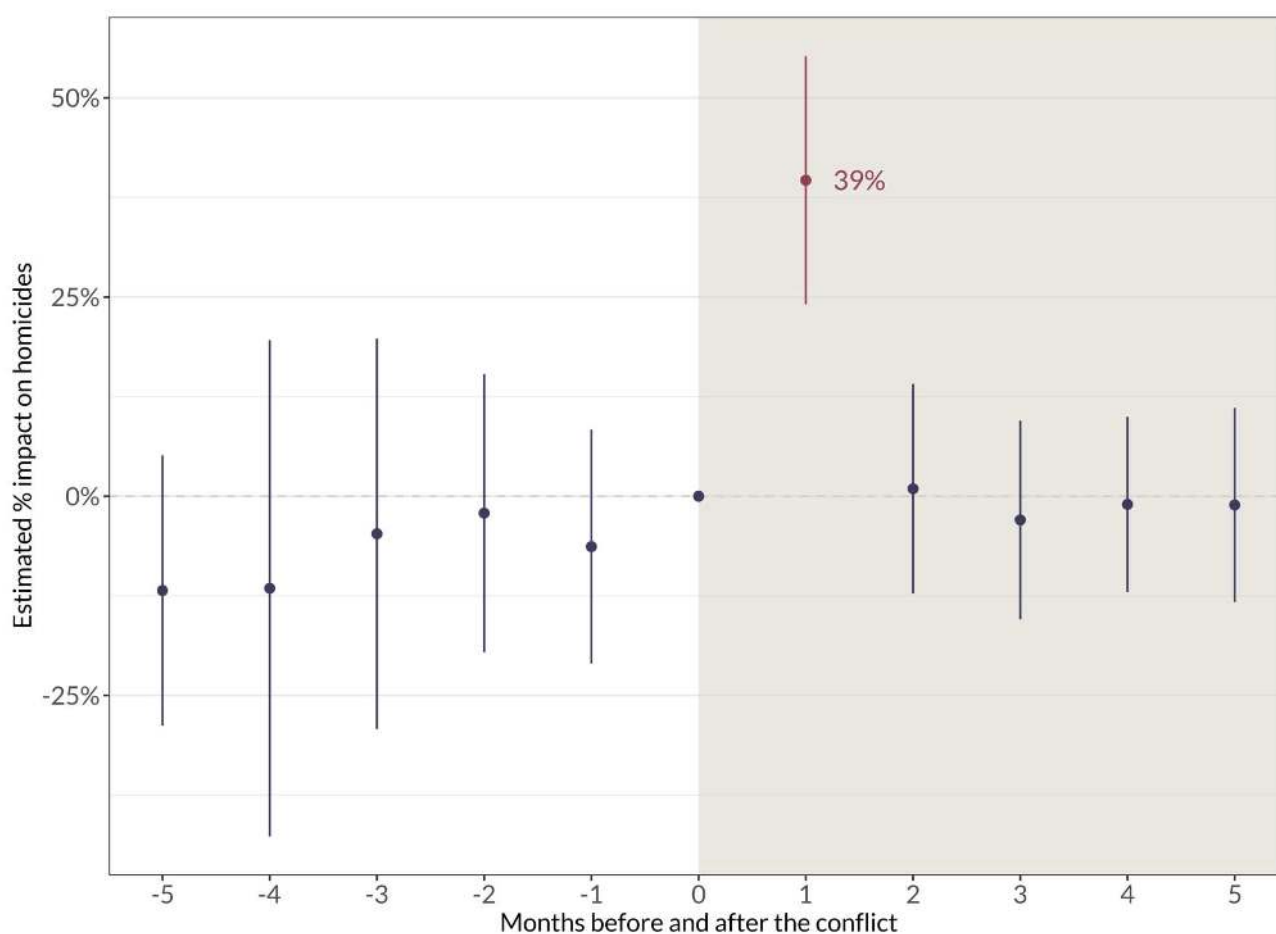
To quantify the impact of criminal networks on homicides in Bahia, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) used monthly gang conflict data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) and official homicide records from Brazil's national health system (SUS) for the cities in Bahia for 2023. The GI-TOC also analyzed typological and spatial patterns of conflicts involving criminal networks in the state.

Between May 2022 and April 2025, more than 3 500 conflicts involving criminal networks occurred in Bahia, with 62.4% being clashes between rival groups or between criminal networks and state security forces. The remaining 37.6% were incidents in which criminal networks attacked civilians.



Conflicts involving criminal networks in Bahia, May 2022–April 2025. Source: ACLED

The statistical results show that each clash involving criminal networks led to a 39% increase in homicides in the municipality where it occurred in the month following a clash. By the second month, homicide levels returned to baseline, suggesting that the violence is concentrated around specific events involving criminal networks.



Estimated impact of gang conflicts on homicides in Bahia. Note: The analysis follows the methodology by Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeulle. Sources: ACLED and SUS

These results underscore the central role that organized crime plays in driving lethal violence in Bahia. Homicides are closely tied to these dynamics and occur in localized, time-bound clusters involving criminal actors. This highlights the need for rapid and targeted interventions to disrupt organized crime violence. Further analysis shows that the victims of the rising number of homicides caused by clashes involving criminal networks are black or of mixed-race. As a result, every increase in clashes between criminal networks has an overwhelming impact on non-white communities. Rising criminal violence is therefore exacerbating Brazil's racialized geography of violence: generations of segregation have concentrated Afro-Brazilian communities in underserved urban outskirts where the state provides few public services and police operations are disproportionately deadly. These same territories are now the primary battlegrounds for the PCC, the CV and their local partners.

The dominant role of criminal networks in Brazil's public security challenge is clear. By refusing federal assistance, the Bahia state government exemplified the [deficiencies](#) in Brazil's public security sector, where each state government approaches crime and violence issues in isolation. The state government's justification is at odds with the reality, where

organized crime is greatly contributing to human insecurity. Failing to acknowledge the severity of the public security crisis benefits criminal networks and mafia-style groups, who continue to engage in violent clashes to consolidate their already powerful positions in the state.

Rather than pursuing heavy-handed confrontations without coordinating with other public security stakeholders, state governments have the opportunity to contribute to a new paradigm for Brazil's alarmingly low resilience to organized crime. Partnering with federal government agencies, exchanging intelligence and best practices with other states and policy experts, and leveraging data on violent crime can improve law enforcement interventions. While public security policies in Brazil have suffered because of a lack of reliable data, this analysis demonstrates that there is increasingly robust statistical evidence available to guide better responses to Brazil's extensive political economy of crime.

This analysis is part of the [GI-TOC's series of articles delving into the results of the Global Organized Crime Index](#). The series explores the Index's findings and their effects on policymaking, anti-organized crime measures and analyses from a thematic or regional perspective.

Exhibit 7

Brazil Brazil Groups

First Capital Command – PCC

by *InSight Crime*

28 Nov 2022 Updated 2 Jun 2026

The First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital – PCC) is Brazil’s largest and most organized criminal network. Emerging in São Paulo in the 1990s, the group is believed to have a presence in every state in the country and has expanded its operations to other countries in Latin America, as well as Europe and Asia.

It was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States in June 2026.

Table of contents

- [Recent PCC News](#)
- [What’s the Story of the PCC?](#)
- [Who Are The PCC’s Leaders?](#)
- [Where Does the PCC Operate?](#)
- [Who Are the PCC’s Allies and Enemies?](#)
- [What is the Future of the PCC?](#)

Recent PCC News

May 29 – PCC and CV Designated a Terrorist Organization by the United States

The US State Department announced that it was designating the First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital – PCC), as well as the Red Command Comando Vermelho (CV), as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) and Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), from June 5, 2026.

What's the Story of the PCC?

The PCC formed in the wake of a massacre in São Paulo's Carandiru prison in **October 1992**, in which Brazilian security forces killed over 100 prisoners following a riot.

In August 1993, a group of eight prisoners who had been transferred to Taubaté prison formed the PCC to fight for justice for the massacre and to push for better prison conditions. They expressed solidarity with another prison-based gang, the **Red Command**, adopting its slogan "peace, justice, freedom," and advocated for revolution and the destruction of the capitalist system.

In 1999, the group carried out the biggest bank heist in São Paulo's history, stealing over \$7 million.

In subsequent years, the government moved to split up the PCC's leaders, transferring them to prisons across the country. However, this allowed the gang to forge stronger links with other crime groups and to spread its ideas more widely.

It had become impossible to deny the PCC's existence by 2001, when it coordinated the biggest prison rebellion the world had ever seen, with simultaneous shutdowns in 29 facilities across São Paulo state.

In 2006, the PCC launched an even more significant protest after members were transferred to remote facilities. Imprisoned gang members took control of more than 70 prisons across the country, holding visitors hostage. Simultaneously, the group launched coordinated attacks on the outside focused on São Paulo that left more than 150 people dead.

Over the next decade, the PCC **grew in strength** and sophistication, aided by a **virtually unimpeded** ability to conduct business in Brazil's underresourced prisons, as well as a reported truce with the São Paulo police. In the early 2010s, the group began branching out to establish drug and weapons trafficking operations in neighboring countries like **Bolivia** and **Paraguay**.

During the early 2010s, the PCC also **made attempts** to influence politics in its home state of São Paulo.

With increasing recruitment rates and revenues, the gang began to emerge as the **most powerful** criminal organization in Brazil. Boasting more than 11,000 members across the country, and with multimillion-dollar monthly revenues, the PCC **expanded** its criminal portfolio to include large-scale international drug trafficking operations. The group **developed ties** with the powerful Italian mafia, the 'Ndrangheta, and began **laundering money** in foreign countries like China.

In the latter half of the decade, the PCC grew bolder in its use of violence. The group was blamed for a **series of armed robberies** in Paraguay in 2015. And in early 2016, a **video surfaced** on the internet depicting the decapitation of a teenager, reportedly linked to a dispute between the PCC and its erstwhile ally, the First Catarinense Group (Primeiro Grupo da Catarinense – PGC).

In late 2016, the PCC **broke a longstanding truce** with the Red Command, setting off months of bloody prison riots that led to **hundreds** of deaths. Authorities linked the violence to **clashes** between the two groups over control of lucrative drug trafficking routes running through the remote northern Amazon region of Brazil. Reports also suggested that the PCC was **seeking to challenge** the Red Command in its home city of Rio de Janeiro, and that the PCC was **fending off challenges** from a rival group in São Paulo state, contributing to a spike in violence there.

In 2017, the PCC appeared to move into **expansion mode**. The group was linked to international drug shipments traveling through **Uruguay**, kidnappings and robberies in **Bolivia**, and **attempts to recruit** dissident members of the demobilizing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC).

The PCC was also blamed for a spate of murders reportedly linked to conflict over the drug trade in **Paraguay**. And in April 2017, the gang reportedly carried out the **biggest armed robbery** in Paraguay's history.

The **fallout from the breakdown** of the PCC-Red Command truce continued to generate **violence** in early 2018, with the PCC seemingly undeterred in its **ongoing campaign** of domestic and international expansion.

By the end of the 2010s, the PCC **had become** a significant transnational criminal organization, with strong control over drug trafficking and other criminal activities in much of Brazil, and strong connections to the international drug trade.

In the early years of the 2020s, however, the group came under increasing pressure from Brazilian and international authorities. The group's senior leadership was destabilized after the government intercepted the group's communications, as well as ongoing warfare with rival organizations, and the transfers of top leaders to federal penitentiaries.

In 2024, the gang entered the worst internal **crisis** in its 30 years of existence, following the leak of a recording of a conversation in which top-ranking PCC leader Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho, alias "**Marcola**," calls fellow gang leader Roberto Soriano, alias "Tiriça," a "psychopath."

The recording of the conversation was used in the criminal case against Tiriça, and he declared that Marcola was a whistleblower. Together with Abel Pacheco, alias “Vida Loka,” and Wanderson Nilton de Paula Lima, alias “Andinho,” Tiriça issued a statement demanding Marcola’s exclusion from the PCC leadership, which was responded to with another statement by Marcola and the PCC highest level leadership group declaring the expulsion and ordering the death of the other three leaders.

The crisis **remained** unsolved in 2025, but Marcola’s exclusion was not unanimous. Marcola declared he was being slandered by the other leaders and most of the PCC members on the streets remained loyal to him, even as some of the gang’s traditional leaders questioned his authority. Meanwhile, Tiriça and Vida Loka were expelled from the gang.

Who Are The PCC’s Leaders?

The PCC is run at the highest level by a group of powerful regional leaders, many of whom are incarcerated. It organizes itself in cells, with local leaderships working on a vertical hierarchy. The gang’s highest cell is known as the General High Command (Sintonia Final Geral), and is run by Marcola and other six leaders. Dues are collected from members of the organization and are used to **pay lawyers**, buy off prison guards and police, and to purchase drugs and weapons.

Two founding members of the PCC, Jose Marcio Felicio, alias “Geleirão,” and César Augusto Roriz da Silva, alias “Cesinha,” were expelled from the organization in 2002 as Marcola took power. Geleirão and Cesinha founded a rival organization, the Third Capital Command (Terceiro Comando da Capital — TCC).

Marcola is the group’s maximum leader, operating from prison, where he is serving a two-decade drug trafficking sentence. After him, six other members are **understood to be** the group’s second-in-command, according to information by São Paulo’s Public Ministry from June 2025. Among them, Cláudio Barbará da Silva, alias “Barbará,” and Reinaldo Teixeira dos Santos, alias “Funchal,” allegedly replaced Tiriça and Vida Loka after their expulsion.

The chart also mentions Antônio José Muller, alias “Granada,” Eric Oliveira Farias, alias “Eric Gordão,” Márcio Luciano Neves Soares, alias “Pezão,” and Júlio César Guedes de Moraes, alias “Julinho Carambola,” as second-in-command after Marcola.

Where Does the PCC Operate?

The PCC is strongest in his home base of São Paulo, Brazil’s most populous and economically important state, though it maintains a presence around the country. In recent years, it has expanded its

activities internationally, developing operations in nearly every country in South America in addition to establishing ties with European crime groups.

Paraguay has become an important stronghold for the Brazilian organization in Latin America. In Europe, Portugal is the country with the most PCC activity. According to a 2023 report by the Portuguese Security Intelligence Service, around 1,000 PCC members **operate** in the country.

Who Are the PCC's Allies and Enemies?

A 20-year truce between the PCC and the Red Command broke down in late 2016, resulting in a rapid grab for territory and allies by both sides.

To shore up support in the northern territories, which are home to important drug trafficking routes, the PCC **allied** with rivals of the Red Command. However, some of those alliances appear to have **broken** down. The group **maintains** an alliance with the northeastern gang Bonde do Maluco (BDM), through which they trade drugs and weapons and enable the migration of criminals. Reports suggest that the Pure Third Command (Terceiro Comando Puro – **TCP**), a dissident **gang** from the Red Command, and criminal **groups** from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul are also allied with the PCC.

Despite the rivalry, the PCC and the Red Command made some attempts at cooperation in 2025. In February, the gangs **established** a truce that **lasted** no longer than two months, due to local rivalries between branches of the groups across Brazil.

What is the Future of the PCC?

The PCC's ambitions are not limited to the domestic environment. Its recent spread throughout Latin America has resulted in it filling a void in countries where no homegrown criminal organization has taken charge. The gang has also been diversifying the types of crime in which it operates through participation in cybercrimes, such as money laundering with **cryptocurrencies** and **virtual fraud**, as well as **public contracting** graft.

The gang's diffuse leadership structure has made it resilient to challenges from rivals, as well as authorities' attempts to disrupt its leadership. Despite tensions among top leaders, the group will likely remain among Latin America's most powerful criminal organizations due to its strong territorial control and its involvement in a multitude of criminal economies.

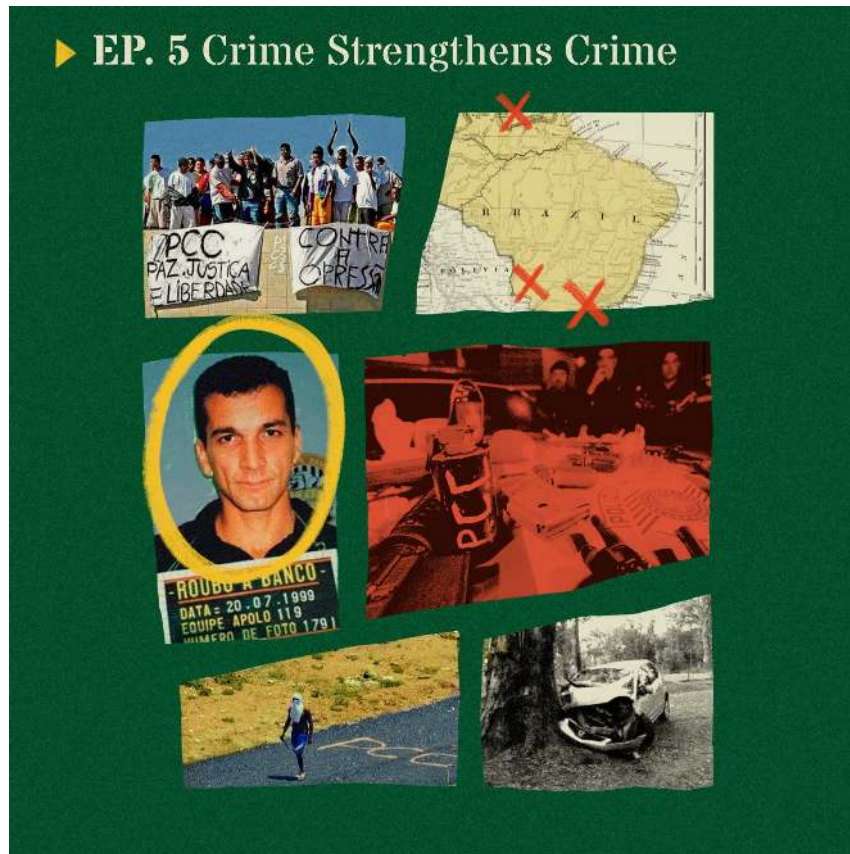
Exhibit 8

Crime Strengthens Crime

 insightcrime.org/audio-from-the-ground-up/insight-crime-podcast/brazil-crime-strengthens-crime

Camila Aristizábal

April 18, 2024



The rise of the biggest gang in the southern hemisphere and a Brazilian judge that still believes in justice.

In this episode, we talk to Ivana David, a Brazilian judge who has had a front-row seat to the creation and the evolution of the region's largest criminal organization, o Primeiro Comando da Capital, or PCC, as its known for its Portuguese acronym. The judge has spent her life trying to combat the forces responsible for the group's incredible rise to power and has some unexpected takeaways from that journey.

Listen on

▼ Transcript

Steven: [00:00:00] On the afternoon of March 14, 2003, a Brazilian judge named Antônio José Machado Dias left a courthouse in a city called Presidente Prudente in the southeastern state of São Paulo. Antônio Machado, or Machadinho, as

people like to call him, was one of the judges responsible for the vast São Paulo state prison system. Since São Paulo had close to a third of all Brazil's prison population at the time, Antônio's job was difficult. It included investigating prison abuses and signing off on transfers between regular prisons and maximum security prisons where some of the most dangerous criminals in Brazil were held.

For his work, Antônio had received threats and had an occasional security detail, but he often didn't use it, especially when he had to travel from the headquarters of the state judicial system, the city of São Paulo, which goes by the same name as the state, to far away places like Presidente Prudente, which is a few hundred kilometers away. Besides, in Brazil, there wasn't a history of attacks on judges.

So as he got into his black Vectra, he had little reason to worry. But on that day, not long after he began driving, he was intercepted by a white Fiat Uno that swerved into his lane. In his attempt to avoid a collision, he turned his car onto a curb and hit a tree. As Antônio struggled to get out of his badly damaged vehicle, a passenger from the Fiat, which had stopped, approached the Vectra with a nine millimeter handgun and shot the judge three times, including once in the chest and once in the head, killing him on the spot.

Meanwhile, back in the city of São Paulo, another judge, Ivana David, was in her office. Judge David had basically the same job as Judge Machado, so if someone was going after him, it wasn't unreasonable to think that she too could be a target. Years later, Ivana told me she remembered the moment she found out about her colleague's death. It was almost like it was yesterday, she said.

Judge Ivana: [00:02:21] *I remember, I remember perfectly...*

Steven: [00:02:24] It was about six or seven in the evening, and a call came through: "Are you sitting down?"

"Yes," she said. "I'm sitting at my desk."

"Something terrible has happened. Judge Machado has just been assassinated."

Judge Ivana: [00:02:40] *Judge Antônio Carlos Machado was murdered.*

Steven: [00:02:41] "What?" Ivana said. The person on the other end of the phone relayed the gruesome details: the crash, the body slumped over the steering wheel, the coup de grâce. She was stunned.

Judge Ivana: [00:02:54] *I confess that I was distraught, we had never experienced anything like this before.*

Steven: [00:02:57] She later collected herself. But she knew something had changed for the worse. Something was different now. As she told me, she had never felt the power of a criminal act so personally and so profoundly.

Judge Ivana: [00:03:12] *It was the first time we felt such a strong force .*

Steven: [00:03:19] Welcome to InSight Crime's podcast, where we investigate from the ground up to help you understand how organized crime works in the Americas. I'm your host Steven Dudley, InSightCrime's co-director.

In this episode we talked to Ivana David, a Brazilian judge who has had a front-row seat to the creation and the evolution of the region's largest criminal organization, o Primeiro Comando da Capital, or PCC as it's known for its Portuguese acronym. The judge has spent her life trying to combat the forces responsible for the group's incredible rise to power and has some unexpected takeaways from that journey.

I spoke to Ivana back in 2019, but I thought about her after a recent series of prison riots in Ecuador. The riots came after the new government announced an offensive against the country's criminal organizations and a transfer of top criminal leaders to maximum security facilities. The government claimed it would squelch the gangs with force both inside and outside of prisons, and the gangs responded.

Newscast 1: [00:04:35] Ecuador roiled by violence as gangs and terror groups stir up chaos nationwide.

Newscast 2: [00:04:40] The latest outbreak of violence in Ecuador ...

Newscast 3: [00:04:41] Inmates in rival gangs using machetes and grenades. Nearly 120 people killed.

Newscast 4: [00:04:45] It is the latest in a series of deadly riots inside Ecuador's prisons.

Newscast 5: [00:04:50] ... has declared a state of emergency to deal with a wave of riots and crackdowns.

Newscast 6: [00:04:54] You could be forgiven for asking what's happened to Ecuador.

Steven: [00:04:57] They overran prison blocks in various parts of the country, and took numerous guards hostage, as well as burned cars in the streets and ransacked a television channel while it was broadcasting live.

Newscast 7: [00:05:12] This is the chilling moment when armed men stormed the set of a public TV channel in Ecuador, firing off guns and waving apparent explosives ...

Steven: [00:05:19] Ecuador's most well-organized criminal gangs got their start in prisons. They have since become the base from which they can coordinate criminal activities: pay bribes to police, politicians, judges, and prosecutors, and launch full-on sophisticated assaults on rivals and the state.

These types of operations have become all too familiar in the Americas from the United States to Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. At InSight Crime, we've tracked criminal dynamics in all of these places, and we've found they all have something in common. Some of the most important leaders are in jail, and often the most powerful criminal groups run their operations from their prison cells.

Nowhere is this more true than in Brazil. And perhaps no one knew this better than Judge Ivana David.

Ivana told me she first noticed something different was happening in the prisons around the year 2000. At the time, she was working as a judge for internal affairs.

Judge Ivana: [00:06:30] *If the prisoner revealed any kind of injury, I, as a judge, would have to call that prisoner in to find out what happened...*

Steven: [00:06:36] When a prisoner was beaten or tortured and filed a formal complaint, Ivana would go to the jails and get that inmate's testimony directly.

Judge Ivana: [00:06:43] *And I was the only woman.*

Steven: [00:06:46] She was the only female judge at the time and close to thirty years old.

Judge Ivana: [00:06:49] *Imagine me at 30 or younger. A girl.*

Steven: [00:06:52] But she said she didn't have any problems. The key, she said, was treating the prisoners with respect and never hiding what her function was — administering justice.

Judge Ivana: [00:07:02] *I have never, ever had a problem with a prisoner, no prisoner has ever disrespected me.*

Steven: [00:07:08] As she talked to the inmates, she realized something was happening. One group was kidnapping new prisoners and holding them for ransom inside the prisons. That group, she found out later, was the PCC.

Judge Ivana: [00:07:21] *The First Command of the Capital.*

Steven: [00:07:27] Prison gangs in Brazil had a peculiar history. During Brazil's last military dictatorship, between 1964 and 1985, the jails were filled with political prisoners who were mixed with criminals. Ivana told me the two mingled, and soon the criminals were developing an ideology that centered on prisoners' rights and improving prison conditions.

Judge Ivana: [00:07:51] *These are two worlds that meet.*

Steven: [00:07:53] Out of this came the country's prison gangs. The first of them was known as Comando Vermelho, or Red Command, which emerged in the prisons of Rio de Janeiro in the 1970s.

Judge Ivana: [00:08:05] *And it also stems from an involvement of common prisoners with political prisoners on Ilha Grande.*

Steven: [00:08:11] Ten years later came the PCC, whose birth is traced to a prison uprising in 1992, in what was then the country's largest prison system in the state of São Paulo.

Newscast 8: [00:08:22] *The prisoners made bonfires and burned clothes and mattresses. The entire area was surrounded. When the police decided to act, the result was tragic.*

Steven: [00:08:32] In the brutal crackdown that followed, at least 111 inmates were killed.

Newscast 9: [00:08:37] *The biggest prison massacre in the world.*

Steven: [00:08:42] Out of this came a group: the Comando da Capital, the Capital Command. It organized around fighting what it called "the oppressors." This meant the government, of course, but also society writ large, which they felt had

excluded them. The ideology struck a cord. Not just inside prisons, but in huge parts of Brazil, a country that is one of the most unequal on the planet and a place where repression and police killings are commonplace.

They drew up a constitution and a set of rules. This included prohibiting rape and sexual assault in the prisons. But it wasn't just about protecting each other. They also enveloped you like a family would. New initiates were baptized. They called each other "brother," and, like blood relatives, they required a lifetime commitment.

They were also violent. From the beginning, anyone who crossed them got killed. In 1993, they organized a soccer match with a rival gang. But instead of playing, they ambushed the opposing team, then cut off the heads of their leaders before leaving them on the pitch. Shortly thereafter, they changed their name to Primeiro Comando da Capital, or the First Capital Command.

The PCC quickly expanded, and by the time Ivana started hearing about them, although the government did not officially recognize them yet, they were committing horrendous acts of violence against any would-be rival.

Judge Ivana: [00:10:14] *So we start to see the deaths...*

Steven: [00:10:18] She said that, at one prison, she saw a severed head without the eyes, perched on a flagpole.

Judge Ivana: [00:10:23] *When I entered, I saw a head placed on the flagpole where the flag should be.*

Steven: [00:10:29] The PCC would also cut out the tongues of alleged snitches, she said, and even extracted the hearts of their enemies. As Ivana told me, if you had no heart, then you weren't fit to be a member. It was a symbol of their control and a very effective terror tactic.

Judge Ivana: [00:10:45] *One of the hallmarks of this faction is, for example, removing the heart.*

Steven: [00:10:49] The terror gambit worked, and soon the PCC had taken control of nearly the entire prison system of the state of São Paulo. Evidence of this came in February 2001, when the PCC launched what it called "the mega rebellion," taking over 29 prisons at once.

Newscast 10: [00:11:07] *It all started at the end of visiting hours. The rebellion ended nine hours later. The movement was following orders from the First Command of the Capital.*

Steven: [00:11:16] The mega rebellion was a sign that the PCC was moving to stage two: that of direct confrontation with the government. Authorities had finally begun talking openly about the criminal group and targeting its most lucrative criminal activities, namely bank robberies. In the process, it had arrested the person who later would become its leader: Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho, alias “Marcola,” an infamous bank robber.

It was Marcola, Ivana said, who had organized the hit against her friend and colleague, Judge Antônio José Machado Dias, as he drove from Presidente Prudente de São Paulo on March 14, 2003.

Judge Ivana: [00:11:59] *The motivation has nothing to do with the faction. The motivation has to do with the execution of Marcola's brother's sentence.*

Steven: [00:12:06] Ivana said the attack was personal. Marcola targeted Antônio because he was making sure that Marcola’s brother, who was in another prison, would have to carry out his sentence. But the impact was institutional.

Judge Ivana: [00:12:18] *I always received threats on the forum, that they were going to machine-gun me, that they were going to kill me...*

Steven: [00:12:24] I was getting threats constantly that they were going to kill me, she said. That they knew where I lived, that they had information about my daughter.

Judge Ivana: [00:12:32] *It wasn't an easy time. It was the first time in history that a judge had been killed in the state of São Paulo.*

Steven: [00:12:39] It was a very difficult time because they had never killed a judge in the state of São Paulo, which is Brazil’s most populous state. But it was about to get worse.

As Ivana and other authorities amped up their efforts to control the PCC inside the prisons with transfers and isolation of certain prisoners, the criminal organization amped up its efforts to squeeze the government on the outside. Ivana said she started receiving a constant barrage of threats.

Judge Ivana: [00:13:12] *They called from the courthouse, they called home, no matter what. It was hell.*

Steven: [00:13:15] They called her work, her house. “It was hell,” she said. We didn’t have cell phones, we had beepers, but still, they sent threats, she said. Even dropping notes under the door.

The government, however, kept pushing. It isolated more leaders and announced that it was transferring some 750 PCC members to different prisons. The PCC responded, orchestrating a series of riots inside the prisons and attacks across the city of São Paulo, beginning on Mother’s Day 2006.

Newscast 11: [00:13:48] *Wiretaps revealed that the criminal organization planned to carry out rebellions in several prisons during Mother’s Day.*

Steven: [00:13:59] Over the next few weeks, 59 law enforcement were gunned down.

Newscast 12: [00:14:03] The gang behind the police murders is believed to be Brazil’s notorious First Capital Command.

Steven: [00:14:09] The government’s response was even more brutal. At least 505 civilians were killed. A later investigation by a prominent state university said that, of these civilian deaths, 118 were killed in so-called confrontations with police, while another 88 were killed by masked and unmasked vigilantes. It was as if, even amidst the PCC-led uprising, the government was reinforcing the PCC’s argument that they were the oppressors of the people.

Newscast 13: [00:14:41] São Paulo has long been known as a violent city. But the fear is that this recent spate of murders might be the beginnings of an undeclared civil war between organized crime and the police.

Steven: [00:14:54] Ivana took a different lesson from the events. For her, this was proof that the PCC would not be confined to operating behind the walls of the prisons.

Judge Ivana: [00:15:04] *It’s not limited to the prison walls...*

Steven: [00:15:07] Soon, their domain would be the entire country.

During the time the PCC was first expanding, prisons in the Americas were going through a massive transformation. Following the lead of the United States, which had successfully lowered violence and criminality in part by incarcerating people at some of the highest rates in the world, countries all over the region began jailing suspected criminals and convicted prisoners at unprecedented rates. Between the years 2000 and 2010, the incarceration rates doubled in El Salvador and Venezuela. In Colombia, they went up by 60%. In Ecuador, by 50%. And in Brazil, during the same time period, the incarceration rate went up by 100%.

But while they were adding prisoners, these governments were not adding personnel, infrastructure, or measures to deal with the newly incarcerated at nearly the same rate. Prison gangs exploded, and so did the violence inside prisons. The MS13 and the 18th Street gangs in El Salvador, for example, fought numerous bloody battles for control of the prisons where they were held. In response, the government split the gangs, moving them into their own separate prisons. With their de facto respite secure, the gangs got stronger.

In Brazil, the authorities tried the opposite strategy. They sent the PCC to other states, or kept them mixed in the general population, thinking they could dilute their power. This plan also backfired. The PCC spread at an alarming rate. A few years after the 2006 Mother's Day uprising, Ivana began traveling to different parts of the country where, to her surprise, she found the gang's tentacles reached hundreds of kilometers from their birthplace.

Judge Ivana: [00:17:07] *I went to Bahia, for example, I stayed in Bahia for a month...*

Steven: [00:17:10] One of her first stops was the northeastern coastal state of Bahia. There, she spoke to numerous PCC members in prisons.

Judge Ivana: [00:17:20] *There was already a faction there. And how...*

Steven: [00:17:20] One of them, she said, had been released or escaped, then recaptured in Bahia. And almost like a missionary, the PCC member had evangelized his fellow inmates with the PCC gospel: No to the state oppression; yes to protection from your new family. Many of them, she said, had become members of the PCC.

Judge Ivana: [00:17:42] *I went to Bahia, I went to Rio de Janeiro and I already had it.*

Steven: [00:17:45] When she visited other places, she found the same thing. From Rio de Janeiro in the south to the Amazon up north, the PCC was spreading throughout the country.

The PCC won over inmates in many ways that went well beyond their ability to inflict gruesome acts of violence on their rivals.

Judge Ivana: [00:18:08] *And in those hearings, when the prisoners came to talk to me, they would start telling their stories...*

Steven: [00:18:13] The prisoners told her how they had to pay a tax on the inside and how that translated into a kind of support network on the outside. If the wife of a PCC member was pregnant, for example, then they would give money for a taxi to get her to the prenatal checkup.

Judge Ivana: [00:18:34] *... the representative was the one who paid for a taxi.*

Steven: [00:18:35] For those of us who have not been in prison, it's difficult to fathom how important it is for prisoners to feel like their family is taken care of on the outside, and how important it is for them to maintain connections to that world from the inside. The PCC understood this perfectly and harnessed these feelings to their advantage.

Judge Ivana: [00:18:56] *He assures the prisoner that he will take care of his family.*

Steven: [00:19:01] They not only paid small expenses, they also facilitated visits and regulated security during those visits to make sure no one was assaulted or worse.

Over time, the organizations set up what they referred to as “sintonias,” or committees. The PCC has committees for nearly everything. The *sintonia de ajuda*, or help committee, for example, was the one that assisted families with expenses, like the cost of the taxi for prenatal care at the hospital. There are sintonias for the different criminal economies they manage and to help them administer their membership, their finances, and their internal discipline. There's a sintonia that provides basic supplies for prisoners — things like toothbrushes and toothpaste. Another that provides lawyers. Another that takes care of logistics and expenses for family members who want to visit loved ones in far away places, including lodging, transport, and food. As Ivana told me, they take care of both the emotional and the financial needs of the prisoners.

The PCC also has a peculiar way that it manages its factions. From the beginning, as a counter to Brazil's vast inequities between the rich and the poor, and a response to the oppressive way the state administered justice, it espoused what it called "igualdade," or equality. What this means in practice is that the organization is more horizontal than hierarchical. When someone breaks a rule, it holds *debates*, or a form of court proceedings, where a group of prisoners decides the outcome and the penalty.

The PCC rotates leaders frequently inside and outside of the prisons, and seeks to forge consensus rather than issuing top-down directives. Its factions have widespread independence as long as they do not break some basic rules and always give some of the proceeds to the upper echelon. To be sure, Marcola remains the leader of the PCC or, as Ivana says, the CEO.

Judge Ivana: [00:21:16] *It's like being the big CEO, the representative of the company...*

Steven: [00:21:19] But Marcola is part of a board of directors, and like the other senior members, he has a single vote when the board has to come to an important decision. Below this board is the criminal structure, which is organized into cells that do not interact with one another. The PCC is, in other words, a kind of network of criminal entrepreneurs. Akin to a secret society like the Masons, it's able to undertake national strategies and support one another, but also acts on a local level very independently of one another. As they like to say, *o crime fortalece o crime* — crime strengthens crime. This amorphous and compartmentalized aspect of the PCC, as well as its use of the committees, makes the job of law enforcement very difficult.

Judge Ivana: [00:22:10] *For example, the harmony of ties doesn't necessarily align with financial harmony.*

Steven: [00:22:17] That means that if I'm talking to a person in one committee, they have no knowledge of who is in the other committee, Ivana said. Specifically, she cited the example of a group that commits large-scale theft of cargo and trucks, a major activity of the PCC.

Judge Ivana: [00:22:34] *Today, for example, cargo theft is a structure, just like a criminal faction.*

Steven: [00:22:40] Whoever robs the truck, she said, is not the same group that got the weapons to rob the truck.

Judge Ivana: [00:22:46] *The person who steals the truck with the cargo is not the same person who rented the gun.*

Steven: [00:22:52] Nor the same group that's going to sell the stolen goods.

Judge Ivana: [00:22:55] *... that it's not the same person who will sell the cargo, that it's not the same person who will dismantle the truck ...*

Steven: [00:23:01] In the end, no one who they captured that is part of this structure can tell her the beginning or the end of the story.

Judge Ivana: [00:23:10] *... if I capture any of these particles, I won't discover either the before or the after.*

Steven: [00:23:16] What investigators also missed was that the PCC was getting ready to take yet another step up in the criminal world.

In 2017, alias Marcola appeared before a tribunal to testify in a PCC case.

Court: [00:23:37] *Your full name, sir.*

Marcola: [00:23:38] *Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho.*

Steve: [00:23:40] Unlike other CEOs, the PCC's Chief Executive Officer does not give interviews or appear in public forums, so it was rare to see him and hear his voice.

Marcola: [00:23:52] *Good morning, doctor.*

Steven: [00:23:57] Even so, the hearing was hardly revealing. During the question and answer session, Marcola repeatedly denied that he is a leader or even a member of the PCC.

Court: [00:24:08] *Are you part of the PCC?*

Marcola: [00:24:10] *No.*

Court: [00:24:10] *Is he a member of the PCC?*

Marcola: [00:24:12] *No.*

Steven: [00:24:12] While he admitted he knew who the PCC leaders were, he claimed that his conversations with them happened because they were in a dispute, and that he was defending himself and his family.

Marcola: [00:24:25] *I have three young children to raise, I have to be gentle with my family. And that's what I did...*

Steven: [00:24:33] Ironically, at the time he testified, Marcola and the PCC were arguably stronger than ever. They had as many as 30,000 members spread across almost a third of Brazil's states. They controlled giant portions of the increasingly lucrative local drug markets and the contraband cigarette trade. The government kept battling, of course, but it couldn't win. The more PCC it incarcerated, the stronger the group got inside the prison system. The PCC had also started to make bold moves to expand outside of Brazil, most notably in neighboring Paraguay, where they had become a major player in the cocaine and marijuana transportation markets.

Newscast 14: [00:25:16] *What we're going to see is this: We see this pickup truck, but what's going to catch your attention is what's inside. What's inside is an anti-aircraft gun, a machine gun...*

Steven: [00:25:27] A couple of years earlier, the PCC, using a .50 caliber Browning machine gun that was specially mounted like a turret on the back of an SUV, ambushed the most powerful underworld figure in the Paraguayan city of Pedro Juan Caballero, blasting through the front windshield of his armored vehicle and leaving him dead in the driver's seat.

Newscast 15: [00:25:50] *It's a machine gun that began to be used before World War II. It's for shooting down planes—war zone. This city, Pedro Juan Caballero...*

Steven: [00:26:01] The killing was the beginning of a tit-for-tat that has yet to subside in what is one of the most important drug areas for cocaine coming from Bolivia. Besides, throughout Brazil, fights have broken out between various prison gangs who themselves are vying for many of the same criminal economies and trafficking corridors along the border. Many of these gangs rose to power using the same basic and highly effective formula that the PCC had employed: violent, sometimes even savage, action in order to secure power and social and financial incentives to keep that power. But few can do it as well as the PCC. In the prisons that it dominates, for example, violence between inmates drops. And the group has extended its influence to the street, where in the areas it has hegemony, violence also goes down precipitously. In many of these places, as Ivana told me, the PCC is the de facto police, and no one wants to get in trouble with the police.

Judge Ivana: [00:27:02] *I have a very interesting case: An individual was the victim of the theft of his motorcycle...*

Steven: [00:27:08] She said she once had a very interesting case where someone came to her to report that his motorcycle had been stolen.

Judge Ivana: [00:27:15] *And I heard this individual in the proceedings...*

Steven: [00:27:17] A few days later, the same guy returned to our office and told her he no longer wanted to get the authorities to investigate.

Judge Ivana: [00:27:24] *He told me, "Doctor, I don't want the lawsuit anymore!"*

Steven: [00:27:28] "What happened?" she asked.

Judge Ivana: [00:27:29] *"I already got my motorcycle back."*

Steven: [00:27:32] To which she responded that he had gotten his motorcycle back from the local PCC leader.

Judge Ivana: [00:27:37] *And my friend, I don't even want to know what happened to whoever stole it.*

Steven: [00:27:41] "I don't want to know what happened to the person who stole it," Ivana said. Still, resolving crime is only one part of the work the PCC does to keep the population on their side. The PCC also works as a preventative police.

Judge Ivana: [00:27:57] *Any girl, at 11 o'clock at night, nobody, nobody messes with them.*

Steven: [00:28:03] Ivana says that in some of the areas they control, women can walk around late into the night without any fear. It's part of the social contract they've created with Brazilian society, and Ivana calls the PCC a parallel state.

Judge Ivana: [00:28:19] *He's competing with the state all the time.*

Steven: [00:28:21] Where the state is absent, she said, that's where the criminals are. They are where the people are going hungry, don't have hospitals, don't have security. She added that in some poor areas, especially those in big cities like São Paulo, the PCC has the respect and the support of those who live there.

Judge Ivana: [00:28:42] *He has the respect of the community, he helps the community financially.*

Steven: [00:28:46] "It's incredible," she said.

Judge Ivana: [00:28:48] *That's incredible.*

Steven: [00:28:55] But what may be more incredible is that after 30 years as a judge, in which she's seen tragedies like the murder of her friend and colleague Judge Machado, and after 25 years of watching the PCC go from a handful of small-time jailhouse kidnappers and bank robbers to the largest criminal group in the hemisphere, she still believes in justice. While many in Brazil, as well as throughout the region, push for hard line strategies in the face of such challenges, she says that these strategies are not the solutions.

Judge Ivana: [00:29:31] *Killing prisoners and imprisoning them will never end the violence.*

Steven: [00:29:35] "Killing them, locking them all up, is not going to solve the violence," she said.

Judge Ivana: [00:29:43] *If that were the case, it would be easy, just close the prisons and build cemeteries, right?*

Steven: [00:29:44] "If it was so easy, then let's just close the prisons and build cemeteries," she added.

Judge Ivana: [00:29:51] *The challenge is not so simple. The challenge is greater.*

Steven: [00:29:53] "Our challenge is much greater," Ivanna said. "We have to teach people to be different. That we can all be different. I think that's what's needed."

Judge Ivana: [00:30:04] *It's about teaching a citizen that they can be different, that they can support themselves, that they have the chance to be better. I think that's what's missing.*

Steven: [00:30:28] This show is a co-production of InSight Crime and La No Ficción. This episode was produced and written by me, Steven Dudley, with a special thanks to Judge Ivana David. Our editors are Elisa Roldán and Thomas Uprimny. Fact-checking by Christopher Newton. Our sound designer is Valentina Fonseca and our graphic designer, Isabella Soto.

InSight Crime is a non-profit organization based in Medellín, Colombia and Washington DC. Our teams go inside prisons, jails, courthouses, police stations, military barracks and even judge's private quarters, to find out why and how organized crime affects the lives of millions of people across the Americas.

If you think these stories are important, consider making a donation. Every little bit helps and will go directly to reporting these types of stories.

We'll be back in a couple of weeks with a story about a former guerrilla soldier who died in prison after trying to forge a truce between El Salvador's vicious gangs. See you next time.

Did you enjoy this episode?

We want our content to remain free. Please consider donating to support our work. Every little bit helps.

In-Depth

Some of the most notorious gangs in Latin America got their start in prisons. They have since become the base from which they can coordinate criminal activities; pay bribes to police, politicians, judges, and prosecutors; and launch full-on, sophisticated assaults on rivals and the state.

These types of operations have become all too familiar in the Americas, from the United States to Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. At InSight Crime, we've tracked criminal dynamics in all of these places, and we've found they all have something in common: some of the most important leaders are in jail and often the most powerful criminal groups run their operations from their prison cells.

Nowhere is this more true than in Brazil, and perhaps no one knows this better than Judge Ivana David, who has been working in the Brazilian judicial system for over 30 years. For the fifth episode of our podcast, we spoke to her about the rise of the PCC, Primeiro Comando da Capital, or the First Capital Command, from a handful of prison kidnappers and bank robbers to the most powerful gang in the southern hemisphere.

Exhibit 9

Just Released: Freedom in the World 2026. Explore the latest findings



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

Brazil

FREE

72
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	30 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	42 /60

LAST YEAR’S SCORE & STATUS

72 /100 Free

A country or territory’s Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



Overview

TOP

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	2 / 4
--	--------------

While Brazilian society is largely tolerant, some populations are not able to fully exercise their human rights in practice.

Just over half of the population identifies as Black or of mixed race. Afro-Brazilians suffer from high rates of poverty and illiteracy, and almost 80 percent of Brazilians living in extreme poverty are Black or mixed-race. Victims of violence in Brazil are predominantly young, Black, and poor. The FBSP also counted 1,467 femicides in 2023, a 0.8 percent increase from 2022; 63.3 percent of femicide victims were Black. There were 83,988 cases of rape in 2023, a 91.5 percent increase from 2011.

In 2019, despite intense pressure from some religious and political leaders, the Supreme Court ruled LGBT+ people are protected under a criminal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of “race, color, ethnicity, religion, and national origin.” However, Brazil has one of the world’s highest-recorded levels of anti-LGBT+ violence. According to a May 2024 report by the Observatory of LGBTI+ Deaths and Violence in Brazil, 184 LGBT+ people were murdered in 2023 while another 18 died by suicide.

Many Indigenous communities—who comprise about 1 percent of the population—suffer from poverty and lack adequate sanitation and education services. The Indigenous population faces considerable discrimination, and their lands were subject to increased pressure under Bolsonaro, encouraged by his rhetoric and support for easing environmental laws.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	3 / 4
--	--------------

Brazilians enjoy freedom to travel within and outside of the country, and to make decisions about their places of residence and employment, though access to high-quality education across all levels remains a challenge.

Gang violence, militias, and police violence in parts of Brazil, especially favelas, have impeded free movement and access to education. According to a report by Fogo Cruzado, which tracks gun violence in parts of Brazil, there were 1,346 gun-related incidents in the first six months of 2024 in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area, though that represents a 24 percent fall from the first half of 2023.

Movement within the state of Bahia and especially in the state capital of Salvador has been affected by violent clashes between organized criminal groups between each other and with police.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	3/4
--	------------

While property rights are generally enforced, laws granting Indigenous populations exclusive use of certain lands are not always upheld, sometimes leading to violent conflicts. In a report on rural conflict released in April 2024, the Pastoral Land Commission said that it registered 2,203 conflicts in 2023, the highest number since its surveys began in 1985. It also recorded 31 killings in 2023, a 34 percent decrease from 2022. In its July 2024 report, which covered the events of 2023, CIMI counted 276 cases of illegal exploitation or property damage against Indigenous people.

Requirements for starting new businesses are often onerous, but authorities have taken steps to ease the process. Corruption and organized crime can pose obstacles to private business activity.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	3/4
--	------------

Exhibit 10

[Support us](#)[Sign in](#)

Int

[News](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Sport](#) | [Culture](#) | [Lifestyle](#)

Brazil

🕒 This article is more than **2 years old**

How a Brazilian prison gang became an international criminal leviathan

The PCC - First Capital Command - arose in the country's notoriously brutal penitentiaries 30 years ago but now controls a billion-dollar drug trade supplying much of Europe's cocaine

**Tom Phillips**

Sat 11 Nov 2023 15.00 GMT



Prefer the Guardian on Google

In a forest clearing deep in the Brazilian Amazon, a bullet-scarred Venezuelan gangster sat smoking Colombian skunk.

“Everyone knows there are only two things this life leads to: prison or death,” the drug dealer said as he narrated his 15-year criminal trajectory, from a teenage rum smuggler to a member of one of the world’s most fearsome organized crime groups.

While his sidekicks mingled under the ice-cream bean tree where they sell crack, cocaine and weed, the outlaw proclaimed their faction’s motto.

“All for one, and one for all. Together we will prevail!” he said in a borderland blend of Spanish and Portuguese. “*Quince, tres, tres!* [Fifteen, three, three!] *Quince, tres, tres! Quince, tres, tres!*”

“Fifteen, three, three” is the alphabetic codename for Brazil’s pre-eminent crime syndicate, the First Capital Command (PCC), which was founded three decades ago in a São Paulo jail. But the Venezuelan dealer was holding court on the rural outskirts of a city in the Amazon, more than 2,000 miles from the penitentiary where the PCC was born.

“They preach peace, justice, freedom, equality and union for everyone,” the Venezuelan said of the faction he was “baptized” into a decade earlier after fleeing over the border to escape being killed.

For much of its 30-year existence the PCC has been considered a jailhouse fraternity, which recruited incarcerated “brothers” such as the Venezuelan by offering them protection within Brazil’s violent, overcrowded prisons. Created in August 1993, it grew into Brazil’s most feared criminal faction, conquering drug markets, smuggling routes, shantytowns and prisons across Brazil, including in far-flung corners of the Amazon. It also became a major player in other South American countries such as neighbouring Paraguay where the group has been blamed for [multimillion-dollar armed robberies and bombings](#) and targeted assassinations.

But over the past five years, investigators say the PCC - which the US now [calls](#) one of the world’s most powerful organized crime groups - has morphed into an even more formidable force after forging lucrative alliances with partners ranging from Bolivian cocaine producers to Italian mafiosi. Today, the group boasts tens of thousands of members and has a growing portfolio of interests, including [illegal goldmines in the Amazon](#). It controls one of South America’s most important trafficking routes - linking Bolivia and Brazil to Europe and Africa - and is partly responsible for [a tsunami of cocaine](#) that has brought car bombings, assassinations and gunfights to parts of Europe.

“If someone is using cocaine in France, England or Spain there’s a very good chance it got there through the hands of the PCC,” said Lincoln Gakiya, a prosecutor from São Paulo’s organized crime taskforce, Gaeco, who estimates the group now makes \$1bn a year - almost entirely from international trafficking.



Corpses are dug out beneath PCC graffiti in the Alcauz penitentiary after a fight between rival gangs left at least 30 prisoners dead near Natal, in the Brazilian north-east, in 2017. Photograph: Andressa Anholete/AFP/Getty Images

The story of the PCC's mutation from regional prison gang to mafia behemoth begins in the early 1990s in São Paulo state, then home to about 50,000 prisoners subjected to subhuman conditions in slum-like jails.

"Prison was a Hobbesian nightmare," said Benjamin Lessing, a University of Chicago professor, referencing the 17th-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes who saw humans as relentlessly pursuing their own self-interest. Lessing, whose next book, [Criminal Leviathans](#), is about the PCC, added: "Everyone was killing each other, fighting each other, raping each other. It was a hellish situation."

That hidden inferno grabbed global attention in 1992 when 111 inmates were killed after [police stormed](#) São Paulo's biggest prison, Carandiru, to put down a riot. Some victims were shot dead; others [mauled](#) by police dogs. Survivors hid beneath cellmates's corpses while police bayoneted bodies to ensure they were dead.

Ten months later, inmates in another São Paulo jail, Taubaté, formed a criminal association they hoped might shield them from similar bloodshed. "The PCC was founded ... because there was nowhere to run," the group's current leader, Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho, later said.

Lessing said the PCC's idea was to use an iron fist to take control of Taubaté and other prisons in order to protect the rights of inmates - and their own criminal interests.



📷 A policeman looks at a municipal bus set on fire in São Paulo, Brazil, on 22 July 2006 amid a string of PCC-linked attacks. Photograph: Mauricio Lima/AFP/Getty Images

“They start in this nightmarish situation and they gather up enough power to subdue all rivals. They become a kind of a leviathan and they take over and then they put in place a kind of social order, a peace, that makes everybody better off.

“Of course, some people don’t like it,” Lessing added. “But for the average prisoner they are happy to be governed, just like the average citizen is happy that there is a state.”

During the 1990s, the PCC tightened its grip on São Paulo’s prison system but largely flew under the radar until thousands of guards and visitors were captured during [a massive 2001 uprising](#). Five years later the group again made headlines, bringing São Paulo to a virtual standstill with [a wave of coordinated attacks on police that caused hundreds of deaths](#).

Gakiya, who at the time was starting his career as an anti-mafia prosecutor, said the PCC offensive caught authorities completely off guard. “We had no idea who was attacking us or how many of them there were,” Gakiya admitted. “We were in the dark.”

Nearly two decades later, the PCC’s punch is crystal clear. “The PCC has become a South American cartel,” said Marcio Sérgio Christino, a prosecutor and author who is one of Brazil’s leading experts on its activities.

Having dominated much of Brazil’s domestic drug market - and established a monopoly over São Paulo’s crime scene - Gakiya said the PCC began looking

overseas in late 2016. Deals were struck with Italy's most powerful mafia group, the 'Ndrangheta, as well as Serbian and Albanian mafias, and the PCC began shipping tonnes of cocaine from Brazilian ports to Europe.

"They buy this [cocaine in Bolivia and Peru] for \$1,200-1800 per kilo ... and sell it [in Europe] for an average of €35,000. In France this year it hit €80,000. This generates extraordinary profits," said Gakiya.



📷 Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho, known as Marcola, at the Presidente Bernardes state penitentiary in 2006. Photograph: Paulo Liebert/AP

Christino attributed much of the PCC's success to its charismatic leader, Marcola, a former street kid and bank robber who took power in the early 2000s during a deadly power struggle involving its two founders, Cesinha and Geleirão.

"He's a very clever dude," Christino said of Marcola, an "avid reader" whose literary preferences include Tom Clancy, Sun Tzu and Machado de Assis. Asked to name his five favourite writers while giving **evidence** in 2006, Marcola cited Nietzsche, Saint Augustine, Victor Hugo and Voltaire and claimed to have read the Bible five times.

A report by a prison psychologist **called the PCC chief** a "clear-headed ... determined, daring and courageous man who would have enjoyed great professional success had he had the opportunity".

Marcola, 55, who is serving **a 342-year prison sentence** for murder, robbery and drug trafficking, is also not a man to be crossed. In late 2018, Gakiya decided to transfer him to a high-security federal prison after the discovery of **an audacious multimillion-dollar plot** to free him with the help of foreign mercenaries, helicopters and anti-aircraft guns. "I knew it might change my life but I also realized it needed doing," the prosecutor said, admitting he did not consult his family first.

Gakiya was no stranger to death threats, but moving Marcola turned his life upside down. PCC leaders issued a "decree" calling for the prosecutor's assassination, condemning Gakiya to a reclusive existence he compared to the life of Giovanni Falcone, the anti-mafia crusader **assassinated** in 1992. "I hope, of course, not to share the same fate as Falcone," added Gakiya, a rock lover who receives 24-hour protection and has not felt safe enough to attend a live concert since watching U2's 2017 Joshua Tree tour.

Another person whose fate Gakiya hopes to avoid is Marcelo Pecci, a Paraguayan anti-mafia prosecutor who was **murdered by hitmen on jetskis** last year while honeymooning on a beach in the Caribbean. "It wasn't the work of the PCC but it was organized crime and it shows they can easily find you - just as I can find them," said Gakiya, who knew the victim and hasn't been on holiday in five years.

"My big worry is the future. What will my future be like after I retire? Will I have to go into exile outside Brazil to be safe?" he wondered.



📷 PCC graffiti has been sprayed onto road signs on a remote Amazon highway leading to the country's biggest Indigenous territory. Photograph: João Laet/The Guardian

The Venezuelan dealer voiced similar uncertainty about his future as he sat at his open-air drug den describing the PCC's complex baptism process, which required him to provide superiors with a series of "references" and six sponsors called "godfathers".

Once you are admitted, "there's only one way out: the Grace of God," he said, referring to the gangland preachers who sometimes rescue members seeking a fresh start.

The Venezuelan expressed pride in being a PCC "brother", a status that saved his skin during a purge of faction rivals at his former prison. "It was a terrible day," he said of the slaughter. "There were hearts and heads on the floor ... guys running around with knives and machetes. It was a really crazy business."

Asked about his dreams, the Venezuelan expressed a desire to visit São Paulo - not to make a pilgrimage to the PCC's birthplace but to see a vast replica of Jerusalem's First Temple built by a Pentecostal megachurch.

"If I've stayed alive this long, it's for a reason," he said, describing three brushes with death. "I'm a miracle."

This is the archive of The Observer up until 21/04/2025. The Observer is now owned and operated by Tortoise Media.

Most viewed

Exhibit 11

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

DECEMBER 1, 2025

Rio Police Undermine Public Safety

Raid That Killed 122 Part of a Pattern of Abusive Use of Force
Published in Nexo Jornal



César Muñoz

Brazil director, Americas Division

 [Cesar Munoz](#)

A month after the deadliest police raid in Rio de Janeiro's history, the Red Command, the organized crime group that was the target of the operation, continues to control the Alemão and Penha neighborhoods. Meanwhile, 122 families, including those of 5 police officers who were killed, mourn the loss of their loved ones. The deadly results and tactics employed raise serious questions as to whether the police command sought, rather than avoided, shootouts.



People take part in a demonstration against a police raid in Rio de Janeiro on October 28, 2025 that left 122 people dead, including two children, October 31, 2025.

© Faga Almeida/UCG/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

The Rio state government said that the October 28 raid resulted in the killing of 117 suspects, including two children, while only six members of the public were injured.

The ratio of people killed to those injured – an astounding almost 20 to 1—is the opposite of what one would expect from a police force that has the duty to protect people's lives and begs the question of whether the true intention was to kill, rather than arrest suspects.

The police explanation of the raid strategy helps understand the deadly outcome. They said that on October 28 several units entered the lower areas of the Alemão and Penha neighborhoods. They pushed gang members up the hillsides through the favela's narrow passages toward a wooded area.

At the top, the military police elite unit, the Police Battalion of Special Operations (BOPE, in Portuguese) had formed what police described as a “wall.” By the end of the day, the police had left behind scores of bodies riddled with bullets. Fewer than 23 percent of the officers who participated in the raid wore body cameras, despite a Supreme Court ruling requiring it.

Residents told the Public Defenders’ Office that police hid in their homes to ambush suspects on the street. Police use that strategy so commonly that it is known as *troia*, for the legendary Greek to conquer Troy.

The raid is part of a pattern of abusive use of force by Rio de Janeiro police forces. Ten years ago, when I started researching police conduct in Rio on behalf of Human Rights Watch, police killed five people from each person that they injured, according to official records I obtained. That was especially surprising given that several police commanders and officers told me the forces had poor aim and deficient training.

Police face very dangerous and well-armed gangs in Rio de Janeiro, and some killings by police are in self-defense. Yet, our research shows that in other cases police used lethal force disproportionately, in violation of Brazilian and international law.

The key to determining when self-defense is really the issue is prompt, thorough, independent investigations, which are never carried out in Rio de Janeiro.

After the October 28 raid, police did not preserve the site of the shootings, conduct crime scene analysis, or maintain the chain of custody of evidence. I have documented similar failures in scores of other police killings in Rio in the last decade.

Traditionally, Brazilian civil police have investigated killings by civil and military police. The chief of Rio’s civil police, who has a duty to ensure an independent investigation, showed the folly of this set-up when, before all the bodies had been even identified, he referred to those killed in the raid as “narcoterrorists.”

He was echoing Donald Trump’s language to justify extrajudicial killings of suspected drug traffickers in the Caribbean.

Prosecutors, not police, should lead these investigations under both a recent Supreme Court ruling and a resolution by the National Council of Prosecutors.

In addition, forensic procedures should be independent. But Rio de Janeiro is one of seven Brazilian states, together with the federal district, in which official forensic units are subordinate to the civil police.

The October 28 investigation also needs robust involvement by federal prosecutors, assisted by federal police, since state prosecutors participated in planning the disastrous raid. Brazil’s attorney general should consider full federalization of the case, an option Brazil’s Constitution allows.

As long as there are no thorough, effective investigations into killings by police, abusive officers will continue to have free rein and abusive raids will continue. These raids threaten police officers who seek to abide by the law as well as the public.

Rio de Janeiro authorities have conducted military-style operations again and again for years without weakening criminal groups. On the contrary, those organizations have expanded to other states and neighboring countries.

Since the operation, police have retreated from the Alemão and Penha neighborhoods and organized crime's grip on those communities is as strong as ever. The people who died will soon be replaced by other poor, young men with few job and educational prospects.

Rio de Janeiro, and Brazil, needs a new public security strategy based on data and science, which truly dismantles dangerous criminal groups by prioritizing intelligence and investigation, and by targeting money laundering, arms trafficking, and penetration in the legal economy.

That requires much stronger coordination between state and federal law enforcement, which has been hampered by distrust that some members of these agencies may be on the criminal group's payroll. Prosecutors need to strengthen investigations into allegations of links between organized crime and police and politicians.

Continuing ineffective abusive operations in low-income, mostly Black neighborhoods, undermines the very rule of law that authorities claim to defend, and only results in more bloodshed.

Related Content

Brazil: Serious Investigative Failures in Deadly Rio Raid

Region / Country

- [Americas](#)
- [Brazil](#)

Source URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/01/rio-police-undermine-public-safety>

Exhibit 12

Is Brazil on the verge of becoming a narco-state?

■ ■ ■ [bbc.com/portuguese/articles/c867yv06vgeo](https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/articles/c867yv06vgeo)

November 11, 2025



Credit, Reuters

The term has been appearing in [social media](#) posts , in the speeches of commentators, and by some authorities.

BBC News Brazil posed the question to seven researchers in the fields of sociology and [public safety](#) . The answer, as one might expect given the topic, is not simple.

In general, experts say that it is not possible to speak of a narco-state when discussing Brazil because the term does not describe the phenomena observed in the country.

There is no precise scientific definition, but the general idea would be of a nation where crime appropriates the structure of the State and makes it function in service of the drug industry — which is not the case when talking about Brazil and practically no other country, emphasize the sources interviewed by BBC News Brazil.

"That term is a bit of an exaggeration," says American researcher Benjamin Lessing, who has been studying criminal organizations in Latin America for over a decade.

"It's difficult to find an example, because what would a narco-state even be? If the State itself were fully engaged in drug trafficking, it wouldn't be a State...", he argues.

In his opinion, the case of Venezuela would be the closest to the definition at present, but only if the accusation made by figures such as US President Donald Trump, regarding the involvement of state agents—in this case, members of the Armed Forces—in drug trafficking, were proven, which has not been the case so far.

In Lessing's opinion, there would also be possible specific historical cases, such as that of Panama between 1983 and 1989, when the country was governed by Manuel Noriega, who was directly involved in drug trafficking.

Or the situation in Mexico during the 1970s and 80s, under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which "didn't manage drug trafficking, but regulated, let's say, the cartels." "The PRI managed to maintain peace between the cartels for a while by kind of managing the market," Lessing assesses.

The sources interviewed for this report emphasize that the word "narco-state" is more of a term that has been circulating in the press and in public debate, sometimes with political intentions, than a concept discussed among those who research criminal organizations.

This does not mean, however, that there is no worrying increase in organized crime in the country, nor that these factions have infiltrated politics.

Not by chance, violence is now seen as the main problem in the country by most Brazilians, topping the list of concerns for 30% of respondents in the most recent Genial/Quaest survey, far ahead of social problems (18%) and the economy (16%). It should be one of the major issues discussed in the 2026 presidential elections.

So how do we characterize what we see in Brazil?

Experts argue that criminal groups have a "parasitic" and sometimes "symbiotic" relationship with the State, without, however, intending to replace it.

These are two powers that coexist, they say, often sharing the so-called monopoly of violence, or the prerogative to use violent means to maintain order or prevent crime—which, in theory, should belong solely to the State.

"In Brazil, and in many other countries around the world, I work with the idea that there are coexisting power regimes, different sovereignties, and that the State does not have a monopoly on force and justice, a fundamental condition of state hegemony," says Gabriel

Feltran, research director at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and full professor at Sciences Po in Paris.

"But that doesn't mean a narco-state," he adds, who is the author of *Brothers: A History of the PCC*.

A portrait of the expansion of crime.

It is within this context of a "duopoly of violence"—of the State and of crime—that many researchers analyze and explain the growth of power exercised by criminal organizations.

Two indicators reveal the current situation in Brazil: the business dealings of organized crime—along with the billions of dollars it has begun to move—and the territorial expansion of criminal factions.

Cocaine trafficking today represents a small fraction of the estimated annual revenue of criminal organizations. It amounts to R\$15 billion out of a total of R\$348 billion, according to a recent study by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (FBSP).

After enriching themselves through drug trafficking in the 1990s and 2000s, criminal organizations have diversified their activities and sources of income in recent years. Cybercrimes and cell phone thefts, for example, have proven to be an extremely lucrative business, generating R\$ 186.6 billion per year.

Legal markets, initially used for money laundering, have also proven profitable, moving R\$ 146.8 billion per year, according to figures from FBSP.

The financial growth of criminal factions occurred in parallel with their expansion throughout the national territory—and even internationally. After dominating communities in Rio de Janeiro and the outskirts of São Paulo, CV and PCC went beyond their original borders in search of control over both cocaine trafficking routes and drug sales points.

In this process of expansion, they grew through their own ventures, recruiting members across the country, or in association with local groups.

According to a survey released in 2024 by the National Secretariat for Penal Policies (Senappen), linked to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP), there are currently 88 criminal organizations spread throughout the country.

Some of them exert territorial control over the communities in which they are present: they monitor who enters and leaves, impose rules of conduct, and punish those who do not follow the rules.

Around 31 million Brazilians live in conditions like these, in areas dominated by gangs, according to a recent survey conducted by Datafolha at the request of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security.

This represents 19% of the population, 5 percentage points higher than in 2024 — a jump that gives an idea of the extent of the problem's progression.

The percentage is not only high by Brazilian standards. It is probably the highest observed in Latin America, says Benjamin Lessing, a professor at the University of Chicago.

In a study he and other colleagues recently conducted using data from Latinobarómetro (one of the largest public opinion surveys conducted in the region), the result was even worse, reaching about 26% of Brazil's population, somewhere between 50.6 million and 61.6 million people.

This was the highest percentage among 18 Latin American countries, including places known for the high penetration of the drug industry, such as El Salvador, Colombia, and Mexico, where the estimated proportion of the population living in areas dominated by criminal organizations was 9%.

Brazilian mafias?

Lessing notes that the 9% figure may be an underestimate, due to the way the questions were formulated in Spanish to those interviewed by Latinobarometer—meaning the proportion of people living under the control of criminal organizations in those countries is possibly higher.

Nevertheless, he says he is "convinced" that Brazil is a leader in this worrying statistic, known among scholars of the subject as "criminal governance."

The explanation lies in Brazil's very particular characteristics when it comes to criminal organizations, including the fact that the country is not a drug producer, but a transit point.

"In this faction model, you are combining criminal governance with drug retail, whereas in Central America this drug retail market is not as strong," observes the sociologist.

"When you're selling drugs there at the 'drug den,' you have a lot of incentive to provide for the government. You want everyone there to like you more than the police. Just controlling crime won't prevent the police from coming in. And when the police come in, you want people to protect you, and for them to protect you, you have to earn their loyalty," he argues.

This was one of the research topics of sociologist Eduardo Dyna during his master's degree at the São Paulo State University (Unesp) a few years ago.

He studied the dynamics of protection, security, and conflict management of the PCC in the outskirts of São Paulo to understand the relationship between the faction's actions and the sense of security reported by some residents of these areas.

Dyna, who grew up on the outskirts of Osasco, chose the theme after encountering, in 2021, while taking her grandfather to the doctor, one of the banners that the faction had spread throughout areas of São Paulo and the metropolitan region with a warning to motorcyclists: "No wheelies or doing wheelies. Subject to beatings. We will not tolerate these things in the community."

"Those noisy motorcycle stunts are something nobody likes, and the PCC has banned those kinds of incidents," explains the researcher.

This is a practical example of how "criminal governance" manifests itself, an expression also used by the sociologist.

Now pursuing his doctorate at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), Dyna is focusing on the internal contradictions of the São Paulo-based faction. On one hand, there's the "original" PCC, which, in a way, brought order to the outskirts of São Paulo. On the other, there's the business-oriented PCC, "from Faria Lima," more guided by market logic, a result of the faction's enrichment.

"The PCC has accumulated a lot of capital, a lot of money, and has also gone through a process of internationalization. All of this produces forms of internal reorganization within the faction," observes the researcher.

"How can we understand a criminal organization like the PCC, which produces order in the outskirts of São Paulo, but is killing indigenous people in Roraima? It's the same organization, but the interests, due to this geographical region, are different," he adds.

In this sense, sociologist Rodrigo Ghiringhelli de Azevedo, a member of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security, points out that the national expansion of criminal factions in the last decade has given rise to a large network connecting different illegal businesses.

He cites everything from illegal mining, occupation of indigenous lands and illegal logging to infiltration of the fuel market and "corruption at the local level," with the involvement of criminal groups in the provision of services such as garbage collection and public transport, and the diversion of funds to finance election campaigns.

"This is perhaps an important new development for us to understand what is happening. These illicit markets have been connecting, and as they have been connecting, they have evidently increased the power of these groups and their capacity for influence in a number of

sectors," says Azevedo, who is also a professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS).

"I would not, of course, call Brazil a narco-state. I think we are very far from that," says the sociologist. He assesses, however, that it is possible to speak of the presence of a "diffuse narco-state," which does not have control over institutions at the federal level, but which appears in specific examples and on a smaller scale—in cities and regions, for example.

"To what extent do these groups already have significant influence in local parliaments, where many urbanization issues are decided and councilors are elected, and also in state parliaments?" asks Azevedo.

"To what extent does this influence go, and to what extent is a sector of the political system already co-opted and working, in a certain sense, to boost and enhance these illicit activities? This is something that is clearly worrying."

The researcher does not point to any specific location, but states that in areas of Rio de Janeiro, such as the Baixada Fluminense, the territorial dominance of factions "causes this dynamic of organized crime to be very connected to the political and electoral dynamics, influencing electoral choices and establishing campaign financing relationships."

"So, it seems to me that Rio de Janeiro today has a more evident expression," he points out.

In his view, this process has even brought some factions, such as Comando Vermelho and Primeiro Comando da Capital, closer to what are known as "mafia organizations."

"They don't control the state apparatus, as a narco-state would, but they have considerable influence through corruption and the co-opting of personnel, both in public security and within Parliament and the Executive branch," he explains.

What is behind the rise of the factions?

How did Brazil get to this point?

The increase in drug consumption in the country is one of the factors, already pointed out by Lessing as one of the motivators for territorial domination by the factions.

He also mentions the PCC's drive for national expansion, which ultimately led to the emergence of local factions that rejected the arrival of the São Paulo-based group and, in turn, also gave CV the opportunity to create a network of local alliances and grow nationally.

In the researcher's view, the State ended up facilitating this process, and that is another important element in the explanation.

"This is a thesis that I support in my book [in production], I think that in several dimensions the State ends up helping to spread the factions on the street," says the researcher.

One example would be the mass incarceration policy practiced for decades in Brazil.

Unlike what is observed in other countries heavily affected by organized crime, in Brazil the main groups emerged within the prison system. The CV (Comando Vermelho) in Rio de Janeiro in the 1970s, in a prison on Ilha Grande, and the PCC (Primeiro Comando da Capital) in the Taubaté Detention Center, in São Paulo, in 1993.

Furthermore, the transfer of gang leaders to prisons in other states and to the federal prison system ended up generating an exchange that expanded and strengthened organized crime.

"The [criminal group] Família do Norte was born in the federal system, from contact between prisoners [from the Amazon] and Comando Vermelho," Lessing illustrates.

Once on the streets, the factions find fertile ground to proliferate in areas marked by vulnerability, such as urban peripheries, notes Eduardo Dyna.

The sociologist points out that these are places where the State is present with discipline and repression, but often absent when it comes to rights to education and health and the provision of infrastructure.

"This vacuum will be filled by someone, sometimes by a social movement, sometimes by a political party, sometimes by a church, sometimes by criminal organizations," the researcher assesses.

Within this context of expanding crime, Benjamin Lessing points out with concern that the State does not prioritize recovering territories currently controlled by factions.

In this respect, he draws attention to the recent case in Rio de Janeiro, of the police operation that killed 121 people in the Penha and Alemão complexes, an operation whose objective was not to free these regions from the control of the Comando Vermelho, but to execute dozens of arrest warrants.

"I think this is very revealing. The state is not trying to regain a monopoly on violence—the most basic thing we all think states do or should do," he points out.

"But nobody is doing that, neither the right nor the left. Nobody is saying, 'We have to establish a state presence in this place.' As if it were impossible, or undesirable, or not as

important as arresting criminals," Lessing adds.

Experts like Dyna argue that the expansion of organized crime in the country is worrying and that authorities should prioritize tackling the problem, but they emphasize that the use of misleading terms, such as "narco-state," can be counterproductive in the discussion and may end up being used as tools by political groups to achieve their goals.

The scientific coordinator of the Center for Violence Studies at USP (University of São Paulo), Sérgio Adorno, agrees, and compares the use of the term to that of "[narcoterrorist](#) ." The expression has circulated both in the US, with the Trump administration, and in Brazil, especially with right-wing governors, such as Claudio Castro of Rio de Janeiro or Tarcísio de Freitas of São Paulo. In Congress, the opposition is working to include this word in legislation.

"The moment you classify these acts as terrorist acts, you transform this problem into a national defense problem. And then it becomes a problem for the Armed Forces, responsible for defending the territory and sovereignty—which is very dangerous," he opines.

The writer and political analyst João Paulo Charleaux, who dedicates himself to the study of international law of armed conflict, makes a similar analysis and adds the word "war" among the terms sometimes misused in the debate surrounding public security.

"It's a rhetorical device that's not just rhetorical, because it has a practical effect. It gives the police the feeling that they can act as if they were at war. You give them a freedom that doesn't exist, that they shouldn't have."

Exhibit 13



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Brazil: Organised criminal groups

Version 1.0

March 2025

Contents

Executive summary	4
Assessment	5
About the assessment	5
1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals	5
1.1 Credibility	5
1.2 Exclusion	6
2. Convention reason(s)	6
3. Risk	7
4. Protection	10
5. Internal relocation	11
6. Certification	13
Country information	14
About the country information	14
7. Geography and population	14
7.1 Geography and map	14
7.2 Population and demography	15
8. Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs)	15
8.1 Number of OCGs in Brazil	15
8.2 Location of OCGs in Brazil	17
8.3 Primeiro Comando da Capital (First Command of the Capital, PCC)	22
8.4 Comando Vermelho (Red Command, CV)	27
8.5 Other OCGs	31
9. Militias	32
10. Inter-OCG alliances and rivalries	37
11. Recruitment and leaving OCGs	37
11.1 Recruitment: general	37
11.2 Recruitment: CV	41
11.3 Recruitment: PCC	42
11.4 Leaving an OCG	43
12. OCG activities	45
12.1 Drug-related crime	45
12.2 Firearms	46
12.3 Environmental crimes	48
12.4 Political violence	49
12.5 Homicides	51
12.6 Other crime types	54

13. Victims of OCG activity	54
13.1 Low-income communities	54
13.2 Informants	56
13.3 Indigenous people	56
13.4 Family members	57
13.5 OCG 'justice system'	57
14. State protection	62
14.1 Criminal justice system	62
14.2 Legal context	62
14.3 Government rhetoric	64
14.4 Policy initiatives	65
14.5 Police response to OCGs	69
14.6 Judicial response to OCGs	79
14.7 Corruption	85
14.8 Witness protection	89
15. NGO response	92
16. Freedom of movement	93
17. Tracking of persons by OCGs	95
Research methodology	98
Terms of Reference	99
Bibliography	101
Sources cited	101
Sources consulted but not cited	109
Version control and feedback	111
Feedback to the Home Office	111
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	111

Executive summary

As of 2024, more than 80 organised criminal groups (OCGs) exist in Brazil. The largest are the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), based in Sao Paulo, and the Comando Vermelho (CV), based in Rio de Janeiro. Both operate throughout Brazil. Militias, OCGs made up of current and former state agents, also operate in low-income communities (known as favelas) in Rio de Janeiro, where they extort populations under their control. The Amazon, border areas and urban favelas are particularly affected by OCG activity.

A person who fears an armed group or criminal gang is not likely to be able to demonstrate a link to the Refugee Convention on the grounds of political opinion, unless they have been living in a community controlled solely by the PCC or CV.

Those most affected by OCG activity are people living in poor communities. Young, black males from low socio-economic backgrounds are vulnerable to joining OCGs due to the perceived benefits they offer. Indigenous peoples are also affected by the general impacts of OCG activity due to the resource-rich, strategic regions in which these communities generally live. However, they are not likely to be targeted or face persecution or serious harm due to their race alone.

A person is likely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state actors or, in the case of militias, rogue state actors when they have taken, or are perceived to have taken a stand against the group, or: are members or former members of the group who have, or are perceived to have, transgressed the rules of the group. Whether and to what extent a person is at risk from a group will depend on: the reason(s) for the group's interest; the area the person usually resides in and will return to; the group's intent, size, reach and capabilities.

In general, the state is willing and able to provide effective protection, but consideration must be given to the circumstances of the case and the OCG they claim to fear.

Internal relocation is generally possible but will depend on the size, reach, capability and intent of the group or gang the person claims to fear, as well as the reasons why the group has an interest in them.

Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

[Back to Contents](#)

Assessment

Section updated: 27 March 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**, a person:

- faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm from an organised criminal group
- can obtain effective protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- can relocate within a country or territory to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

The term ‘organised criminal group’ (OCG) is used in place of ‘gangs’ as sources differentiate between criminal gangs (which generally have no connection to the state) and militia groups (which are made up of current or former state agents).

[Back to Contents](#)

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).
- 1.1.4 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 A person who fears an armed group or criminal gang is not likely to be able to demonstrate a link to the Refugee Convention on grounds of political opinion. This is because, while non-state armed groups maintain (and vie for) pockets of territorial control and carry out some state-like functions in areas of control, their presence and capacity are not so pervasive to be considered ‘political’ in nature.
- 2.1.2 In the country guidance case of [EMAP \(Gang violence, Convention Reason\)](#), heard on 27 April and 9 June 2022 and promulgated on 16 November 2022, the Upper Tribunal (UT) considered whether persons who fear a gang in **El Salvador** fall within the scope of the Refugee Convention on the grounds of political opinion and membership of a PSG.
- 2.1.3 The UT in [EMAP](#) held that the main gangs operating in El Salvador, MS-13 and Barrio 18, are ‘political actors’ and that:
 - ‘... (ii) Individuals who hold an opinion, thought or belief relating to the gangs, their policies or methods hold a political opinion about them.
 - ‘(iii) Whether such an individual faces persecution for reasons of that political opinion will always be a question of fact. In the context of El Salvador it is an enquiry that should be informed by the following:
 - ‘(a) The major gangs of El Salvador must now be regarded as political actors;
 - ‘(b) Their criminal and political activities heavily overlap;
 - ‘(c) The less immediately financial in nature the action, the more likely it is to be for reasons of the victim’s perceived opposition to the gangs.’ (Headnote, paragraphs (ii) and (iii))

- 2.1.4 The UT in [EMAP](#) provided further analysis of the applicability of political opinion in paragraphs 112 to 122 of the determination. It considered that there are a range of reasons why a gang (or gangs) target a person, not all of which will fall within the Refugee Convention.
- 2.1.5 The UT's findings in [EMAP](#) **are specific to the circumstances in El Salvador at the time of the ruling**. However, the situations in El Salvador and Brazil have some similarities and merit comparison. Both have high levels of organised crime dominated by gangs which have de facto control over parts of the country (in El Salvador) and certain communities (in Brazil) and have sought to influence the state.
- 2.1.6 However, there are significant differences between the 2 countries:
- Brazil has a more diverse criminal landscape with approximately 80 criminal gangs as well as armed militia groups working and competing with the largest 2 groups, the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and the Comando Vermelho (CV), for control over territory and drug trafficking routes. Although the PCC and CV have a presence in most states of Brazil and exercise de facto control over the communities they dominate, they are not necessarily as dominant as their equivalents in El Salvador.
 - The PCC and the CV are relatively smaller (approx. 130,000 members altogether, or 0.06% of the population) than the MS-13 and Barrio 18 in El Salvador (60,000 members, 1% of the total population).
 - The PCC, CV and militia groups have sought to influence the state. However, their influence on political affairs is not as extensive as in El Salvador. Whilst corruption exists within state agencies in Brazil, particularly at the local level, the state continues to take action against OCGs, including corrupt officials, at a federal level (see [Risk](#), [Protection](#)).
- 2.1.7 On the available evidence, the situations are sufficiently different to conclude that OCGs in Brazil are not 'political actors' in general, and that the UT's findings in [EMAP](#) **do not generally apply** to a fear of an OCG in Brazil, in relation to political opinion. However, in low-income urban communities or favelas that are controlled by the PCC or CV, the influence of these OCGs is significant and they exercise extensive social control over residents. Therefore, although a person who fears an OCG in Brazil does **not** generally fall within scope of the Refugee Convention on grounds of political opinion, this may be applicable where they have been living in an area controlled by the PCC or CV.
- 2.1.8 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.9 A person with a well-founded fear of persecution from an OCG for a non-convention reason may still qualify for humanitarian protection.
- 2.1.10 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Risk

- 3.1.1 Those living in favelas and low-income communities dominated by OCGs

are not, in general, likely to face treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm solely by virtue of living there.

- 3.1.2 Persons who fear OCGs in Brazil are not at a general risk of persecution by OCGs. They are likely to face persecution or serious harm when they:
- disrespect a group leader, or take (or are perceived to take) a stand against the organised criminal group, including public figures such as journalists, prosecutors and politicians
 - are, or are perceived to be, an informant
 - have stolen from the group, or owe the group a debt
 - are members or former members of the group who have (or are perceived to have) transgressed the rules of the group
- 3.1.3 Whether a person is at risk from an OCG and the extent of the risk, will depend on:
- their actions, and the reason(s) for the group's interest
 - the area the person usually resides in and will return to
 - the group's intent, size, reach and capabilities
- 3.1.4 In general, family members of targeted persons do not become targets themselves, although there may be some instances in which family members do become targets, including where a major betrayal/transgression has occurred, or if the person had a leadership role. Some indigenous people also face displacement, exploitation and harm due to increasing OCG activity in their territories but in general they do not, as a group, face a real risk of treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm (see [Victims of OCG activity](#), [Environmental crimes](#), [Political violence](#)).
- 3.1.5 Brazil has a diverse criminal landscape, with approximately 80 criminal gangs and militia groups operating alongside and against the 2 largest gangs in the country, the PCC and the CV. The PCC has approximately 100,000 members operating in almost every Brazilian state as well as internationally, with its base in Sao Paulo. The CV has approximately 30,000 members, operating in about 20 Brazilian states and other Latin American countries, and has its base in Rio de Janeiro. The majority of other OCGs are present in 3 states or less and generally ally with either the PCC or the CV (see [Organised Criminal Groups \(OCGs\)](#), [Militias](#)).
- 3.1.6 The PCC and CV are rivals and compete for territory and control of drug trafficking routes. Expanding into the Amazon has led them to branch into environmental crimes such as illegal mining and logging. They are also involved in arms trafficking, kidnap, bank robberies and increasingly in financial crimes such as money laundering through legitimate businesses, extortion and loansharking. The PCC has reportedly begun infiltrating the state, through obtaining public contracts for services and funding candidates for municipal elections (see [OCG activities](#), [Primeiro Comando da Capital \(First Command of the Capital, PCC\)](#), [Comando Vermelho \(Red Command, CV\)](#), [Corruption](#)).
- 3.1.7 Militia groups formed of current and former law enforcement officers compete with the CV for territory in favelas or poor communities in Rio de

Janeiro, and there are reports of such groups developing in other states. Although these groups initially formed to counteract the drug gangs, sources report that they are now indistinguishable, as they also dominate and extort communities under their control, monopolising the provision of essential services and sometimes making alliances with the gangs, leading them to become 'narcomilitias'. It is unclear how many militia groups currently operate and in which states outside of Rio de Janeiro. Due to their connections to state apparatus, sources reported that militias pose more danger to individuals than other OCGs (see [Militias](#)).

- 3.1.8 The PCC and CV both originated in and exercise significant influence over inmates within the country's overcrowded state prison system, where they position themselves in opposition to the state and provide order and resources to inmates which the state cannot. Within Brazil's prisons, they recruit new members and incarcerated leaders continue to issue orders to members on the outside (see [Primeiro Comando da Capital \(First Command of the Capital, PCC\)](#), [Comando Vermelho \(Red Command, CV\)](#), [Recruitment and leaving OCGs](#), [Federal prisons and prisoner transfers](#)).
- 3.1.9 In general, OCGs in Brazil do not engage in forced recruitment. Most recruitment takes place within prisons. Sources stated that most OCG members are young, black males from low socio-economic backgrounds who view joining an OCG as a way to make money and attain a higher level of social status. Alongside those living in poor communities under the 'rule' of OCGs, this demographic are therefore the people most likely to be affected by OCG activity. As OCGs are diversifying their activities, sources reported that they have actively recruited IT and finance professionals and in some cases fund individuals' education to help them secure strategic positions, such as public service roles, which benefit the group. They may also recruit people who work in ports and airports to assist their drug trafficking activities (see [Recruitment and leaving OCGs](#)).
- 3.1.10 In general, the offer to work for an OCG can be refused without repercussion, although some sources suggest that it may be difficult to refuse, particularly in prisons. Generally, a person with a low-level position in an OCG may be able to leave the group. OCGs may also allow a person to leave for religious reasons. Anyone with more than a medium-level role may not be permitted to leave due to their knowledge of the group's operations. Those who owe a debt to the group would also be unable to leave until the debt is repaid. Those who leave the PCC are prohibited from engaging in any further criminal activity and will be monitored to ensure they comply with this rule. If they are found to be taking part in criminal activity, they are likely to be targeted (see [Recruitment and leaving OCGs](#)).
- 3.1.11 In the communities OCGs dominate (generally low-income communities and favelas on the peripheries of large cities), OCGs exercise significant social control. The PCC is highly organised, with a strict set of rules its members must follow. In cases of both rule-breaking by members and disputes brought to them by community members, the CV and PCC impose their own form of justice through 'crime courts', where penalties for perceived wrongdoing are not standardised and can be minimal, or as severe as execution. In neighbourhoods which are under the control of an OCG, residents are generally not permitted to go to the police and are instead

required to bring any disputes to the OCG who will mediate. Examples of accusations that may result in a person being at risk of serious harm include being an informant, personally disrespecting a group leader, stealing drugs or money from the group, and owing and not repaying a debt. People are reportedly also sentenced to death by OCGs for sexual crimes and child abuse (see [OCG 'crime courts' and punishments](#)).

- 3.1.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

4. Protection

- 4.1.1 In general, the state is willing and able to provide protection but there may be exceptions to this. Consideration must be given to the circumstances of the case and the OCG a person claims to fear. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they would not be able to obtain effective protection.
- 4.1.2 Brazilian law criminalises being part of an OCG, and the government speaks out against organised crime. Multiple policy initiatives exist to combat organised crime, including citizen security initiatives, deployment of troops at ports, isolating group leaders in maximum security prisons and increasing resources to fight environmental crime. Police regularly conduct searches and seizures and arrest OCG members (see [Legal context](#), [Government rhetoric](#), [Policy initiatives](#), [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).
- 4.1.3 High-profile OCG leaders have been arrested and transferred to high security federal prisons across the country, where they are kept in isolation. Sources indicate that this has had a positive effect in disrupting their communications. However, the same leaders have been convicted of crimes they have ordered when they are already in jail (see [Federal prisons and prisoner transfers](#), [Notable decisions](#)).
- 4.1.4 The federal police generally work hard to combat OCGs, but have limited human resource in relation to the size of the country (there are 13,000 federal police officers and Brazil has 16,000 kilometres of land border and a population of approximately 212 million people). A lack of cooperation and communication between federal and state entities challenges the efficacy of combatting OCGs. However, the federal police regularly carry out searches and seizures and investigations into OCG activity (see [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).
- 4.1.5 State-level law enforcement is heavy-handed. Lengthy, violent confrontations between the police and OCGs in low-income/marginalised areas and favelas, result in local residents confined to those areas, including children, being caught in the crossfire and killed. These community members do not necessarily have any connection to OCGs and are predominantly of Afro-Brazilian descent. Such police operations also restrict the freedom of movement of people in the community. The duration of these operations varies (see [Operations in favelas](#), [Freedom of movement](#), [Witness protection](#)).
- 4.1.6 State police can treat complaints of threats or danger from an OCG with suspicion as such threats can be an indication of the complainant's involvement with the group, and they may not receive protection. Residents

of communities controlled by OCGs are forbidden by the groups to go to the police in general, and must instead bring any issues before the OCG itself (see [OCG 'crime courts' and punishments](#), [Operations in favelas](#), [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).

- 4.1.7 Sources report that in general the judiciary is independent, but is overburdened and inefficient, with millions of backlogged cases. However, many OCG members have been convicted, and most OCG leaders have been sentenced and are in prison. Approximately 70% of the PCC's members are in prison (see [Judicial response to OCGs](#), [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).
- 4.1.8 Corruption is widespread, with OCGs, particularly the PCC and militias, having made political connections to state officials, including in the state police and judiciary. The PCC have reportedly funded candidates to municipal elections. Militia members are reported to have official positions in state and local governments. Militia members are put on trial less frequently than gang members, and areas under their control are targeted less frequently in police operations. The federal government works hard to combat corruption but lacks the necessary resources (see [Corruption](#), [Operations in favelas](#)).
- 4.1.9 Brazil has a witness protection programme which is open to all. However, it is hampered by budgetary limitations and is not always effective in protecting a person's identity. Persons of political importance are generally well-protected. Witnesses against corruption and militias face a heightened risk of retribution due to these actors' connection to the state apparatus (see [Witness protection](#)).
- 4.1.10 For background information about the criminal justice system generally and an assessment of its effectiveness in providing protection, see the [Country Policy and Information Note, Brazil: Actors of protection](#).
- 4.1.11 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 In general, internal relocation is likely to be reasonable, particularly to Brasilia in the Federal District. However, decision makers must consider the size, reach, capability and intent of the group or gang the person claims to fear, as well as the reasons why the group has an interest in them.
- 5.1.2 Different factions of the same OCG can and do communicate with each other meaning that the PCC and CV would have the ability to track a person of interest across Brazil, due to their presence throughout the country. Whether they would have a desire to do so would depend on the alleged infraction. In general, stealing from an OCG, informing on them, personally disrespecting a group leader and failure to repay a large debt could result in a person being tracked. What constitutes a large debt would depend on the perception of the creditor. Former group members are monitored and are targeted if they break the conditions of being permitted to leave. Generally, these issues relate to people who have been part of the OCG. However,

prominent public figures such as prosecutors and politicians who attempt to disrupt OCG activity are also likely to be tracked throughout the country ([Political violence](#), [Tracking of persons by OCGs](#), [Leaving an OCG](#)).

- 5.1.3 Persons who do not fall within the above circumstances would generally be able to relocate, either to a different part of the same state or to a different state, depending on the group they are claiming to fear (see [Tracking of persons by OCGs](#)). For 2024 data on which OCGs operate in which states, see [Location of OCGs in Brazil](#). For a map of which neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro are occupied by which OCG, see [Rio de Janeiro OCGs](#).
- 5.1.4 OCGs are present in every state of Brazil, and the PCC and CV have near nationwide and international reach. The PCC has approximately 100,000 members operating in almost every Brazilian state as well as internationally, with its base in Sao Paulo. The CV has approximately 30,000 members, operating in about 20 Brazilian states and other Latin American countries, and has its base in Rio de Janeiro. The majority of other OCGs are present in 3 states or less and generally ally with either the PCC or the CV (see [Organised Criminal Groups \(OCGs\)](#)).
- 5.1.5 Brazil has a population of approximately 212 million people. In 2023, sources reported approximately 39,500 homicides (around 0.016% of the population). In 2023, the states with the highest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants were Amapa, Pernambuco and Alagoas (all in the North and Northeast regions of the country) and the states with the lowest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants were the Federal District, Santa Catarina and Sao Paulo. Sources do not disaggregate crime data based on the perpetrator, so it is unclear how many crimes are attributable to specifically OCG activity. However, sources reported that homicides were generally higher in areas where OCGs are in conflict and that recently OCGs have been competing for territory in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil (see [Homicides](#), [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.6 Freedom of movement within Brazil is generally possible. However, it can be restricted in territories where OCGs are in conflict and during police operations against OCGs which tend to be heavily armed. There have been reports of local residents being caught in the crossfire. This is usually in low-income communities and favelas. Local services such as schools and health centres may also close during these events. Residents who live in a neighbourhood dominated by one faction may not be able to cross into a neighbourhood dominated by another. People may also be expelled from their homes if the dominant OCG suspects they are connected to another faction (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.7 While the onus is on the person to establish a well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm, decision makers must demonstrate that internal relocation is reasonable (or not unduly harsh) having regard to the individual circumstances of the person.
- 5.1.8 For more on internal relocation within Brazil generally, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Brazil: Internal Relocation](#).
- 5.1.9 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94(3) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Brazil is listed as a designated state. Such a claim must be certified under section 94(3) if you are satisfied it is clearly unfounded.
- 6.1.2 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.3 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

Exhibit 14

The Government of Brazil, the European Union and UNODC launch Protecting Futures: Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Children by Criminal Groups in Brasilia



A new partnership between Brazil and the EU, implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), that aims to protect children and adolescents from recruitment and exploitation by organized crime.

The Government of Brazil, in partnership with the European Union and UNODC, officially launched *Protecting Futures* on 20 March 2026 in Brasilia. The initiative underscores Brazil's firm commitment to preventing and responding to the recruitment and exploitation of children by organized crime; and strengthens cooperation between Brazil, the EU, and UNODC in advancing child protection as a requirement for enhancing public safety, in line with Brazil's growing leadership in regional and global efforts to tackle organized crime and prevent violence against children.

Every year, an estimated one billion children worldwide are subjected to violence or neglect. Children represent around 15 per cent of all intentional homicide victims, with organized crime causing levels of lethal violence comparable to those observed in armed conflicts.^[1] In Brazil, for example, 2,489 intentional violent deaths of children and adolescents aged 0 to 17 were recorded in 2022 alone, with a strong concentration among Black male adolescents living in territories marked by structural vulnerabilities and the presence of organized crime.

Across regions, armed and criminal groups systematically and often transnationally recruit, use, and exploit children to shield adult perpetrators from detection and accountability, and to expand their illicit activities. The consequences for these children are immediate and severe, they are exposed to grave dangers as well as long-lasting physical and psychological harm. Whether through overt force, economic pressure, intimidation or manipulation, criminal groups target children at their most vulnerable, drawing them into cycles of violence that devastate young lives, undermine community stability and contribute to insecurity that extends across borders. These dynamics increasingly involve the use of encrypted messaging, online gaming environments and algorithmic targeting linked to illicit economies, including drug trafficking and arms smuggling, which creates new challenges for prevention and child protection systems.

During the launch event held at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP), representatives from the Government of Brazil, the European Union and UNODC underscored the project's relevance to national needs and priorities. The event convened representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, Ministry of Development, Social Assistance, Family, and Hunger Alleviation, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, and the judicial system, alongside leading civil society organizations, reflecting a broad commitment to strengthening child protection from organized crime.

"We must adopt a unified and coordinated approach, one that transcends geography and institutional mandates and reflects our shared responsibility to protect children and safeguard our societies from the threats of crime and violence. This is why the European Union consistently seeks cross-country experience sharing through its programmes" – Maria Rosa Sabbatelli, Head of Unit, Global and Transregional Threats & Challenges, European Union.

The project, implemented by UNODC with funding from the European Union, will run from 2026 to 2029 with the aim of preventing and responding to the recruitment and exploitation of children, in full accordance with human rights, gender equality and international law. The initiative adopts an integrated approach that addresses both the drivers of child recruitment and the needs of those who have been affected; while recognizing that safeguarding children's rights and strengthening security are mutually supportive goals. In the Brazilian context, this includes supporting measures that prioritize prevention, access to justice for children, rehabilitation and reintegration, ensuring that security responses do not unintentionally deepen existing vulnerabilities or lead to further violations of children's rights.

The project will work towards two key outcomes: 1) Enhanced government strategies, policies, and mechanisms to prevent and address the recruitment and exploitation of children by armed and criminal groups; and 2) Strengthened resilience among children and communities in vulnerable situations to reduce the risks of recruitment and exploitation. These outcomes will be delivered through four mutually reinforcing pillars: enhancing global awareness, advancing legal and policy reforms, building the capacities of professionals and working in partnership with children and communities. In Brazil, planned activities include generating evidence on recruitment patterns – including online and digital vectors –, providing technical support to legal and policy reforms, and delivering tailored capacity-building for justice, security, social assistance, education and health professionals, alongside community-based initiatives with young people in priority territories such as urban peripheries and strategic port areas.

By combining EU funding, UNODC's technical expertise and Brazil's institutional commitment, the initiative is designed to deliver sustainable and scalable results. It will reinforce and complement *Crescer em Paz*, Brazil's national strategy to protect children from violence, crime, and drugs, launched in April 2025.

"Addressing the recruitment of children requires integrated action at the local level, with education, social assistance, health, and public security working in a coordinated manner. This initiative reinforces a central guideline of Brazil's Drug Policy: preventing violence and ensuring protection through care, inclusion, and the guarantee of rights, in cooperation with international partners and in dialogue with experiences from other countries," said Marta Machado, National Secretary for Drug Policy and Asset Management at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP).

"We commend Brazil's bold vision and commitment to addressing urgent threats to children's safety and well-being, whilst also promoting a deeper shift in the systems that have responsibility for their care and protection." – Alexandra Martins, Coordinator of the Global Programme to End Violence Against Children, UNODC

Protecting Futures is rooted in the longstanding and trusted cooperation between the Government of Brazil, the European Union and UNODC, and was conceived to build on Brazil's recognized leadership and expertise in this field. The partnership will leverage the country's extensive experience and nationally led best practices in protecting children and addressing transnational organized crime, while also offering opportunities for Brazil's significant achievements to be highlighted on the international stage. By aligning with recent Brazil-EU operational cooperation arrangements and relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions on violence against children by organized criminal groups, the project positions Brazil as a key partner in shaping integrated, evidence-based and child-rights-oriented responses.

Exhibit 15

Cycles of Vulnerability

 gov.br/mj/pt-br/assuntos/sua-protecao/politicas-sobre-drogas/criancas-e-adolescentes/ciclos-de-vulnerabilizacao

Children and teenagers exploited in illegal drug markets.

Child labor is one of the most persistent violations of the rights of children and adolescents, compromising their physical, psychological, and educational development. In Brazil, this practice is deeply linked to structural socioeconomic and racial inequalities, where the need for immediate supplementation of family income often pushes adolescents into early and informal economic activities, disproportionately affecting the Black population. When child labor occurs in illegal contexts, it reaches its most critical level of danger, depriving adolescents of their future and exposing them to cycles of violence and social exclusion.

Early and precarious work is not an isolated event, but the result of a trajectory of vulnerability. High levels of economic informality in the territories, coupled with easy access to illicit markets and low levels of education, create a scenario of greater risk for this exploitation, especially for Black boys. In contexts of high socioeconomic and territorial vulnerability, early work emerges as a survival response, but also ends up functioning as a risk factor that increases school dropout and exploitation by criminal networks.

The economic exploitation of children and adolescents in illegal drug markets results from the convergence of multiple forms of exploitation and represents one of the most serious violations of human rights. Therefore, it is fundamental to recognize that this practice should not be viewed solely from the perspective of public safety, but as one of the worst forms of child labor (TIP List). According to ILO Convention 182, the use of children for illicit activities, particularly in the production and trafficking of drugs, is a form of exploitation that requires immediate protection and absolute priority from the State. In illegal drug markets, adolescents are victims of economic, social, and, especially girls, sexual exploitation, being subjected to serious risks to their health, safety, and development, deprivation of liberty, and stigmatization.

When inserted into a structured illegal production chain, these children and adolescents occupy subordinate and highly vulnerable positions, performing low-recognition operational functions under extremely precarious labor exploitation conditions. With daily shifts of more

than 10 hours in environments marked by frequent armed confrontations, this dynamic is incompatible with any form of education, adequate rest, or healthy development. It is, therefore, a form of child labor exploitation that articulates social, economic, and territorial dimensions, reproducing structural inequalities and severely restricting possibilities for social mobility.

Early entry into illegal drug markets

National and international research indicates that, although the entry of children and adolescents into illegal drug markets is concentrated in the 13-16 age group, exploitation is expanding to increasingly younger ages, reflecting a shift in exploitation strategies by criminal organizations. In Brazil, this process coincides with periods of intensified urban violence and the reorganization of organized crime.

The adolescents exploited in illegal drug markets present a demographic profile that reflects profound structural inequalities. The population is predominantly male, reflecting the gender structure of urban violence in Brazil – although the exploitation of girls is also growing, especially in auxiliary roles – and Black, highlighting the harmful effects of structural racism on the safe and healthy development of children and adolescents.

School dropout among adolescents exploited in illegal drug markets is part of a complex combination of factors that reflect both economic pressures and disconnection from the educational environment. On the one hand, the immediate need to obtain or supplement income, whether to help support the family or to acquire personal consumer goods, leads many adolescents to leave school to work; on the other hand, the school context often fails to be attractive to them, as well as not acting as a space of protection and socialization, reflecting structural gaps in the valuation and investment in public education and its professionals.

Particularly significant is the conflict between education and exploitation in illegal drug markets. Adolescents in situations of high socioeconomic and territorial vulnerability face an impossible choice: remain in school, where there are no immediate economic prospects, or enter the illegal drug markets, becoming victims of various forms of exploitation. The

incompatibility between an excessive workload of exploitation and the demands of school makes remaining in school practically impossible.

The family situation of these adolescents is marked by vulnerabilities and a lack of adequate intersectoral institutional support in health, education, social assistance, work, culture, justice, and public safety. Many grow up in families where only one person – often the mother or other female family figures – is responsible for the sustenance and care of everyone. This reality does not reflect parental failure, but rather the operation of structural inequalities that leave single-parent families headed by women in a situation of extreme socioeconomic precariousness.

Single mothers living in poverty face virtually impossible pressure: they need to work to support their families, but with the accumulation of precarious and poorly paid jobs that demand many hours away from home; they must provide care, supervision, and protection to their children, but live in territories where violence and organized crime are omnipresent, especially given the absence or insufficiency of public health, social assistance, cultural, and employment services; and they strive to keep their children and adolescents in school, but the school system frequently fails to provide quality education and protection. This scenario illustrates how the issue of gender cuts across drug policy.

Furthermore, the family vulnerability of these adolescents is frequently aggravated by problems related to drugs, violence, and crime. Many of these adolescents grow up in environments where problematic substance use, domestic violence, and crime are commonplace. These factors reflect how poverty, lack of access to mental health, and the structural violence of Brazilian society permeate and disrupt the family life of the most vulnerable segments of society.

Motivators for entering the illegal drug markets.

National and international research indicates that, although the entry of children and adolescents into illegal drug markets is concentrated in the 13-16 age group, exploitation is expanding to increasingly younger ages, reflecting a shift in exploitation strategies by criminal organizations. In Brazil, this process coincides with periods of intensified urban violence and the reorganization of organized crime.

One of the most powerful motivators for entering the illegal drug market is the immediate economic gain, mainly to help their family. Even though they occupy subordinate positions in the drug trafficking hierarchy, teenagers earn, on average, 3.5 minimum wages, an amount that, although it may seem modest compared to their initial earnings expectations, would be very difficult to obtain in the legal job market. For a teenager with low education and no professional qualifications, the formal market offers few opportunities beyond precarious, poorly paid jobs without social protection. The illegal drug market, on the other hand, provides income comparable to or greater than jobs that require formal education and professional qualifications, as well as a structured career with clear progression.

Beyond income, illegal drug markets offer something psychologically powerful for teenagers: status, identity, and a sense of belonging. In an environment of structural violence – reflected in extreme inequalities, racism, sexism, and social exclusion – the practices and ideas developed in trafficking networks become contagious in larger social contexts, normalizing violence and crime among teenagers growing up in vulnerable territories.

Important: Currently, Brazil faces a critical gap in national data and evidence regarding the extent and dynamics of child and adolescent exploitation in illegal drug markets. For this reason, some of the data presented on this page refers to the situation in Rio de Janeiro, where the phenomenon is best documented, serving as a warning about the need to expand this diagnosis to the entire country, including information disaggregated by age, gender, race, and class.

POLICIES FOR COMBATING ILLEGAL DRUG MARKETS

The state's public security strategy in the most vulnerable territories is based on visible policing, which results both in the arrest of adolescents suspected of involvement with illegal drug markets and in highly lethal armed confrontations – victimizing even children and adolescents not involved in illicit activities. This dynamic reveals the cruelest face of trafficking as one of the worst forms of child labor: the adolescent exploited by criminal organizations becomes the most exposed and fragile link in a chain of violence that frequently culminates in detention or premature death.

Socio-educational system

The economic exploitation of adolescents in illegal drug markets is one of the main vectors of entry into the National System of Socio-Educational Care (SINASE). Data from the SINASE National Survey indicate that, in 2024, drug trafficking was the second most common offense among adolescents deprived of liberty (27%) – also being the second most prevalent among boys (27.7%), but the first among girls (24.5%) – highlighting how exploitation by organized crime functions as a trap that replaces opportunities for development with cycles of institutionalization.

Similar to the profile of adolescents exploited by criminal organizations, the trajectory of those serving sentences of confinement is marked by prior school dropout, structural racism, and a lack of economic alternatives in their territories, where investments in education, sanitation, transportation, and leisure are insufficient.

Furthermore, although boys represent the vast majority of adolescents in socio-educational measures for drug trafficking, girls present specific vulnerabilities that require a differentiated approach. For them, involvement with illegal drug markets is often linked to affective relationships, overburdened family care, and situations of sexual abuse and exploitation. It is crucial to have a perspective that intersects the differentiated vulnerabilities of Black girls, based on the intersection of gender and racial inequalities.

It is important to highlight that SINASE houses adolescents who, for the most part, carry trajectories marked by accumulated traumas, economic deprivation, and systematic violations of rights. In this context, psychological suffering frequently manifests itself through anxiety crises, depression, and feelings of hopelessness, which are aggravated by isolation and the rigidity of the measures depriving them of their liberty.

For many of them, problematic use of alcohol and other drugs emerges as a coping strategy to deal with emotional pain. Mental health, therefore, cannot be treated in isolation, but as a phenomenon deeply inseparable from the living conditions and structural inequalities that accompany the adolescent before and during the fulfillment of the measure.

Addressing these challenges requires a transition from a purely disciplinary model to a psychosocial care perspective that recognizes the crisis not as a "behavioral deviation," but as a cry for help amidst intense suffering. Integration between the National System for Socio-Educational Assistance (SINASE) and the Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS) is fundamental to providing care that goes beyond containment, focusing on qualified listening and strengthening autonomy.

Only by confronting the stigma surrounding both mental suffering and substance use will it be possible to ensure that adolescents receive the necessary support to rebuild their social bonds and develop new life projects, breaking the cycles of vulnerability that led them to the National System for Socio-Educational Assistance (SINASE).

To learn more about mental health in the SINASE (National System for Socio-Educational Assistance), access the [Inspection Panel in the Socio-Educational System](#) of the National Council of Justice (CNJ) and the [Mental Health Panel in the Socio-Educational System](#) of the CNJ in partnership with the Ministry of Health (MS) and the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship (MDHC).

INTENTIONAL LETHAL VIOLENCE

Although SINASE presents a series of challenges to be faced by adolescents in situations of high socioeconomic and territorial vulnerability, it can still be the least traumatic outcome of a trajectory of denied rights, where the absence of prior state protection places them in a zone of high risk of lethality.

Intentional lethal violence (ILV) against adolescents – which includes the crimes of intentional homicide (article 121, caput and § 2, of the Penal Code), bodily injury followed by death (article 129, §§ 3 and 3-A, Penal Code) and robbery resulting in death (article 157, § 3, II, Penal Code), as well as deaths resulting from legal intervention by a state agent – is not distributed randomly, disproportionately affecting black boys, for whom structural racism acts as an aggravating factor of vulnerability, in urban environments, that is, outside their residence.

Under the administration of the MDHC, the Program for the Protection of Children and Adolescents Threatened with Death (PPCAAM) seeks to protect children and adolescents exposed to a serious and imminent risk of death. According to 2025 data, involvement with drug trafficking is the main reason for the inclusion of people in the PPCAAM, corresponding to 45.4% of registered cases. This predominance is directly linked to the profile of the protected public – mostly black male adolescents in contexts of high socioeconomic and territorial vulnerability – and reveals how their exploitation by illegal drug markets is a decisive vector of exposure to violence against children and adolescents.

EXIT STRATEGIES

Leaving illegal drug markets for teenagers is a complex process that faces severe structural barriers. Although many of them express a desire to leave criminal networks, their individual will is hampered by fear, the absence of viable legal opportunities, and a lack of robust institutional support.

This scenario is aggravated by the sensationalization of violence in the media, which promotes fear and the early criminalization of adolescents and their families, spreading stigmas that hinder social and professional reintegration and reinforce cycles of stigmatization that perpetuate throughout life – especially for young Black people. Without a protection network that offers real alternatives, the adolescent often finds themselves trapped in a cycle of repeated offenses, where their time in the SINASE (National System for Socio-Educational Assistance) ends up being just an interval between periods of exploitation in the illicit market.

To transform this scenario, exit strategies must prioritize assisted disengagement through multi-sectoral governance that connects the justice system to health, social assistance, education, culture, and employment services. It is fundamental to promote the right to professional training in line with the expectations of adolescents, preventing early and precarious entry into the labor market from leading to school dropout, as well as implementing psychosocial support programs sensitive to trauma and gender equity, recognizing the distinct motivations of boys and girls and offering dignified life paths.

A robust and widespread intersectoral care network is essential for children, adolescents, and their families to build life plans free from drugs, crime, and violence.

Furthermore, it is crucial to invest in and intensify the fight against racism and racial discrimination within the justice system and public security. Black children and adolescents have life trajectories marked by suspicion and experiences of violence and exclusion that need to be recognized and addressed by the actions and intersectoral actors of Drug Policy.

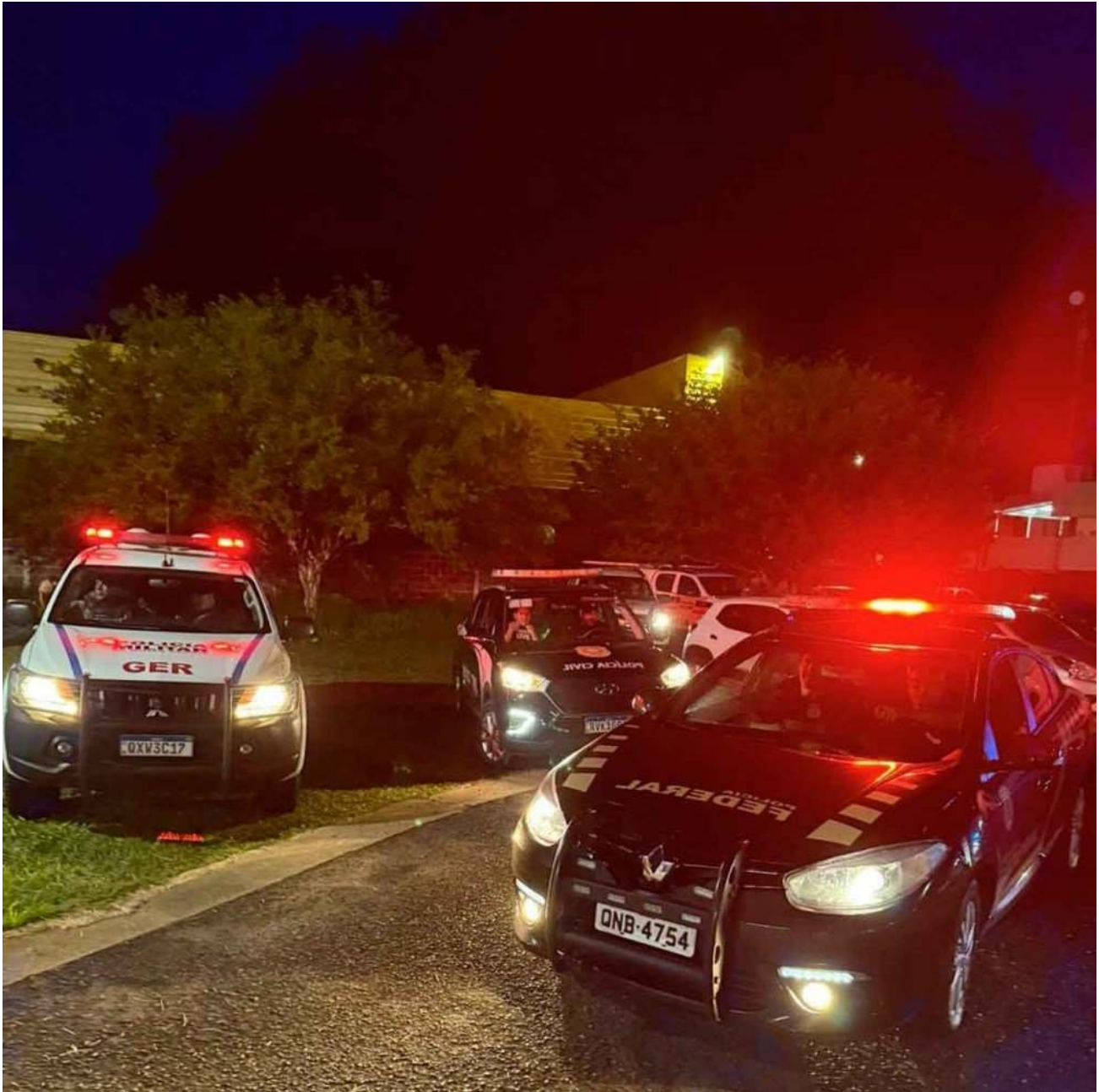
Exhibit 16

Combating factions: where has Minas Gerais failed and what new combat tactics are being implemented?

em.com.br/gerais/2026/05/7411301-combate-a-faccoes-onde-minas-tem-falhado-e-qual-nova-tatica-de-combate.html

Mateus Parreiras

May 4, 2026



[Matthew Parreiras](#)

Two operations that took place in April in Minas Gerais suggest a shift in the pattern of strategies for confronting criminal organizations in the state – a topic on which authorities

have been criticized by justice and public security agents themselves for not effectively targeting the top criminal groups, not integrating institutions, and failing in prison control.

In Operation Luxury (April 15th), the Integrated Task Force to Combat Organized Crime in Minas Gerais (Ficco/MG), involving the Federal, Military, Civil, and Penitentiary Police, achieved arrests, seizures, and the freezing of R\$ 61 million in drug trafficking assets between Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul, and São Paulo. Simultaneously, the State Secretariat of Justice and Public Security (Sejusp-MG) isolated leaders of criminal factions in maximum security facilities and reorganized the prison system to combat the actions of these groups.

In research on public safety in the state, the criticisms from agents were harsh. They indicated a view that Minas Gerais was taking small-time drug dealers, exposed at the retail level, out of circulation, but was failing to reach the top of organized crime.

The lack of intelligence sharing between state agencies combating crime would prevent them from anticipating national and international trafficking and territorial control organizations, which are well-structured and at war with each other in Minas Gerais and throughout Brazil.

These were the main observations regarding the confrontation with factions operating in Minas Gerais, according to the perception of agents from penal, justice, and public security agencies, in research conducted by the Center for Studies on Crime and Public Security at UFMG (Crisp/UFMG) and Sejusp-MG, published in December 2025.

Part of the 1st Public Security Diagnosis of the state, carried out by the institutions and focusing on agents who deal directly with crime, the study included 1,085 forms answered by employees of the Fire Department, Public Defender's Office, Public Prosecutor's Office, Court of Justice, Civil Police (PCMG), Military Police (PMMG) and Penitentiary Police, as well as other municipal bodies and the socio-educational system, in addition to meetings with five groups of 14 members – from base professionals to the managerial level.

What do the agents say?

In a study focused solely on issues related to organized crime operating in Minas Gerais, agents point out a lack of decisive action against local faction leaders, with the State only reaching criminals at the grassroots level. Operation Luxury, on the other hand, revealed a different paradigm, mobilizing 160 police officers to dismantle an interstate drug trafficking and money laundering network.

Targeting the financial and logistical leadership of the criminal organization, the task force executed 27 arrest warrants and seized R\$ 61 million in assets, including real estate and imported cars. The criminal group used shell companies and "front men" to launder the illicit profits generated by transporting tons of marijuana that supplied the Triângulo Mineiro region via the so-called "caipira route."

According to the agents interviewed in the research, conducted before the operation, the fight against organized crime in Minas Gerais had been limited to a "small-scale, step-by-step approach," arresting small-scale offenders but leaving the criminal leadership untouched, as the study's analysis of the professionals' testimonies pointed out. The lack of strategic coordination and integrated intelligence is one of the reasons cited for the actions failing to reach the "drug kingpins."

"Naturalized impunity"

"The growth of organized crime and systematic violations of human rights contribute to maintaining a scenario of widespread and normalized impunity. The cases that reach the sentencing stage are, for the most part, those involving arrests in flagrante delicto (...) far from any response to the dynamics of organized crime (which demand intelligence operations, targeting the networks of influence, corruption, capital flows and money laundering of criminals), (...) the main culprits for the growth of intentional homicides in the country," assesses Crisp/UFGM.

By focusing on the retail level of drug trafficking, the fight against criminal organizations would suffer from the maintenance of the organized crime structure, contributing to the growth of violations and the widespread impunity of criminal leaders, according to the research. Isolated and fragmented efforts by corporations and institutions also generate an overlap of efforts and prevent a coordinated and structural response, in the perception of the agents.

Among professionals, 72% fully agree that adopting an integrated, robust, and unified information system is indispensable. The assessment is that this would bring legal certainty, prevent data discrepancies in investigations, and ensure that the work is no longer fragmented, according to what the researchers heard. This is precisely the type of work that the Ficco/MG operation managed to accomplish in mid-April.

Exhibit 17

Government of Minas Gerais places leaders of PCC, CV, and TCP on federal list of most wanted.

ofator.com.br/informacao/governo-de-mg-coloca-chefes-de-pcc-cv-e-tcp-em-lista-federal-de-mais-procurados

Daniel Haidar

December 10, 2025



Organized by the Ministry of Justice, with the help of the states, the national list of the most dangerous fugitives shows the impact of factions from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo on public security in Minas Gerais. Of the eight criminals indicated by the state government for the federal list, most are linked to the Rio de Janeiro factions Comando Vermelho (CV) and Terceiro Comando Puro (TCP) or to the São Paulo Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), which dispute territory and routes across the country. The list was released on Monday (8).

“The targets share common characteristics: they are highly dangerous criminals, convicted of serious crimes, and are among the main leaders of the three largest criminal factions in the country: PCC, Comando Vermelho, and Terceiro Comando Puro,” says Detective Murillo Ribeiro de Lima, a specialist in police intelligence and organized crime and former coordinator of the Wanted program in Minas Gerais, to **O Fator**.

The police chief points out that this year armed disputes over territories in Minas Gerais have intensified between the CV and the PCC, which has allied itself with the TCP.

“In recent months, the most intense conflicts in Minas Gerais have been driven by territorial disputes in the capital, the Metropolitan Region, the Zona da Mata, and the North of the state. Of particular note in this scenario is the war between Comando Vermelho and Terceiro Comando Puro, the latter supported by the PCC and various local gangs, an alliance known as 'Tudo 3',” adds the police chief.

Proof of Service

On this day, I, Otavio Haverroth Silva, served a copy of the following documents:

**RESPONDENT'S COUNTRY CONDITIONS IN SUPPORT OF ASYLUM AND
WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL**

To the following:

Office Location:	Mailing Address:
Office of the Principal Legal Advisor Department of Homeland Security 900 Market Street, Suite 346 Philadelphia, PA 19107	US Immigration and Customs Enforcement US Department of Homeland Security Office of the Principal Legal Advisor 900 Market Street, Suite 346 Philadelphia, PA 19107

by:

- ☒ Through the EOIR Courts and Appeals System (ECAS), which will automatically send service notification to both parties that a new document has been filed.



Otavio Silva (Bar N. 343486)
Attorney at Law
P.O. Box 90487
San Diego, CA 92169
Counsel for Respondent