

Bolsonaro pardons Brazilian military officers accused of prison massacre

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Jair Bolsonaro pardons military and police officers involved in the massacre of 111 prisoners in the Carandiru prison in 1992.

Brasilia, December 25 (RHC)-- Brazil's Official Gazette has published a decree by which the government of Jair Bolsonaro pardons military and police officers involved in the massacre of 111 prisoners in the Carandiru prison in 1992.

The provision, framed in the traditional Christmas pardon, benefits the 69 surviving uniformed officers out of the 74 initially charged for their involvement in the events. The presidential decree grants pardon not only for crimes committed by law enforcement officers more than 30 years ago, but also to those accused

of committing "culpable crimes" -- without intent to commit them, who have served at least one-sixth of their sentence, according to the text.

Considered one of the bloodiest in Brazil's prison history, the Carandiru massacre occurred on October 2, 1992, when agents of the Military Police entered several wards of the prison in the city of Sao Paulo to quell a riot. The prison, the largest in the South American country at that time, housed almost 8,000 inmates in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

Law enforcement forces violently repressed the revolt, shooting the inmates when many of them were locked in their cells, with no possibility of defending themselves or fleeing.

Subsequent forensic analysis indicated that the 111 dead were shot 515 times, 126 of them in the head, which human rights organizations denounced as executions and crimes against humanity.

The head of the operation, police colonel Ubiratan Guimarães, was convicted in 2001 for excessive use of force, but he never went to prison and an appeal pardoned him in 2006, a few months before he was killed.

Despite being convicted by popular juries, none of the police officers went to prison, thanks to dilatory legal maneuvers used by their defense attorneys to postpone their imprisonment.

The shock of the massacre led the Brazilian authorities to close Carandiru ten years later and subsequently ordered its demolition to make way for a park.

Shortly before it was demolished, it was used for the 2003 Argentine-Brazilian film Carandiru, directed by Héctor Babenco, which offers a vision of what happened in the penitentiary. The film won the India Catalina Award at the Cartajena Film Festival in 2004.

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