

# *Brazilian government to eliminate slave labor*

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By María Josefina Arce

Slavery was abolished 135 years ago in Brazil. However, modern slavery practices persist in the South American giant, mainly in agriculture, mining and domestic services, although cases have also been recorded in construction and clothing manufacturing.

In fact, in the last few days, 225 people were rescued from slavery-like conditions on farms in the Amazonian state of Pará.

One of the priorities of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government is to eradicate this unfortunate situation, and this is corroborated by the fact that from January to April of this year alone more than 1,200 Brazilians affected by this condition were rescued.

On this path, the authorities seek to establish stricter controls and higher fines, but also to develop actions to improve the living conditions of Afro-Brazilians.

The problem is deeper, linked to the racism and discrimination still present in Brazil. Most of the workers who are victims of modern slavery are black.

For this reason, the Brazilian president also launched a set of measures to improve the lives of Afro-Brazilians in the areas of education, labor and access to public services, among others.

This is an old battle of Lula Da Silva, who in his two previous terms of office carried out several actions against this violation of human rights.

In 2003 he launched the National Plan to Eradicate Slave Labor, an initiative that involved the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

Surveillance efforts were intensified and Article 149 of the Penal Code was amended to clearly define slave labor, which is defined as forced labor, debt bondage and degrading conditions.

A line followed by her successor in the presidency Dilma Rousseff, also from the Workers' Party. But the parliamentary coup against her in 2016 put an end to this effort.

The coup government of Michel Temer cut by 70% the funds to combat slave labor. In 2019, the ultra-right-wing Jair Bolsonaro, who did not do much in this area either, would arrive at the Planalto Palace.

Now the new Brazilian government resumes the battle against slave labor in the country, since, as he points out, there is no justification for this illegality to continue in the 21st century.

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