

Brazil redoubles its actions against slavery

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By Maria Josefina Arce

Brazil redoubles its efforts to put an end to slavery, which although legally abolished in the South American country more than 135 years ago, continues to be a problem that affects the poorest citizens, especially Afro-Brazilians, because it is linked to racism and discrimination.

Experts and human rights organizations describe the abolition of forced labor in Brazil as inconclusive, which is why the government presided over by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is intensifying its actions.

Last year, in some 582 operations, more than 3,000 Brazilians were rescued from slavery-like conditions, the highest number since 2009.

The economic activities in which there is the highest incidence are those linked to agriculture, such as coffee and sugar cane cultivation. But they are also strongly present in mining and domestic service.

According to the information, the states with the highest number of cases were Goiás, Minas Gerais and São Paulo.

The authorities also update the so-called "dirty list", which identifies employers, both individuals and companies, who subject their workers to degrading working conditions.

This relationship was created two decades ago, precisely during Lula da Silva's first presidential term, when the fight against slavery was also a priority. In 2020, after several attempts in previous years, there was an attempt to eliminate this mechanism, but the Supreme Court prevented it.

Companies and individuals included in this list may be subject to fines and have loans blocked in public banks.

But the government is also focused on developing social programs to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable people to prevent them from being trapped in the various manifestations of modern slavery.

Last year, the president launched a series of measures in the areas of education, labor and access to public services for the benefit of Afro-Brazilians. For many, the abolition of slavery in Brazil is only on paper. That is why Lula da Silva, in his third presidential term, has once again taken up the fight against this scourge, which was also a commitment during his two previous administrations.

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