

URGENT

PRESS RELEASE

# INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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INTERNATIONALE JURISTEN-KOMMISSION

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Geneva, 22 July 1970

## Report on Police Repression and Tortures inflicted upon Political Opponents and prisoners in Brazil

### I. Introduction

This report gives a summary of a file made available to the I.C.J.  
The file contains three different categories of evidence:

1. Documents and statements of evidence emanating from certain Brazilian jails and concentration camps. These documents were secretly removed from the places of detention and handed over to the reporters.
2. Documents and statements given to the reporters by ex-political prisoners who had either escaped or were in exile outside Brazil. The most recent of these documents (end of June) came, inter alia, from the spokesman of the group of students and militants who were exchanged for the German Ambassador. This group of 40 persons is now in Algiers.
3. Statements of evidence and observations gathered by the reporters during several visits to Brazil, the last of which was in June 1970.

Of necessity the report is fragmentary. Nevertheless it gives an account of some particularly disturbing aspects of the political and legal situation in Brazil today.

### II. Civil War

The vast majority of observers are agreed that there exists today in Brazil a latent civil war situation. The expression is used specifically by the "Neue Zuercher Zeitung" (issue of July 5th, 1970). In this civil war the repressive forces of the military dictatorship on the one hand confront a diversity of opposition groups on the other. A brief identification of the parties involved in the conflict is called for:

1. The principal organs of Government charged with repression:

These organs are of different types. As Brazil is at least formally a Federal Republic, it is first appropriate to distinguish between Federal, State and local organs. On the other hand, due to the Military take-over of the country in 1964, the distinction between military and civil police organs has disappeared. In other words: at a Federal level the military police organs are today entitled to determine the form and strategy of the repression. Alongside the federal civil police named DOPS, exists the very active counter-espionage service of the armed forces: the NIS (National Investigation Service). In addition to these two bodies, the land, naval and air forces each have their own means of repression. The Land Forces have the military police, composed of special and separate units (PE -polícia de exercito). The Navy has the CENIMAR (Naval Investigation Centre) and the Air Force has the air police.

At State level there is the criminal police machinery, the judicial police and the so called "military" police (being a kind of uniformed police whose name varies according to the State).

Finally on the local or regional level, specialised bodies have been created: thus, the Sao Paulo area, for instance, has an organisation specialised in forcible interrogation of prisoners, called "Operation Bandeirantes" (Headquarters: Tutoia St, Sao Paulo) which is composed of ex-police-men, soldiers on active service and persons specially recruited for the purpose.

Besides this official police structure there are a number of repressive groups of which there is no official record: they exist in certain cities (Rio-de-Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Bello Horizonte, e.a.) under the name of the "Esquadrao da morte", the death Squadron, composed of plain-clothed policemen, underground assassins and ex-criminals. These squadrons, whose activities may be verbally condemned by the regimes, but more often covered over by an official silence and de facto impunity, kidnap persons suspected of holding views hostile to the regime, murder so called "antisocial" elements and most of the time mark their deeds by means of a card pinned to the chest of the body. Their activity is clearly aimed at intimidation since their victims are usually abandoned publicly on the side of one of the country's busy roads. Finally, armed members of certain political groups of the extreme right (one of the best known being an activist group from the Nationalist body called "Tradition Family Property" which aims to combat communist influence in the Catholic Church) sometimes join the punitive actions of one or other organs of repression, attend the interrogations and act as political informers.

III. Active Opposition Forces

These forces are recruited from most sectors of the population. However the most strongly represented groups are the universities, the lower clergy, certain religious orders and the liberal professions. They also include deserters from the three armed forces, militants from secret trade unions, militants from political parties banned by the Government, agricultural workers and some members of the upper middle class.