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Brazil: Report on Rio's milícias is only the first step

Amnesty International welcomes the presentation of the final report from the Rio de Janeiro State's parliamentary inquiry into the *milícias* (*CPI das milícias*). The work of the commission, undertaken under great personal risk to those taking part, is an important first step in the fight against the worrying spread of para-policing organizations which are now estimated to control 170 communities across the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Amnesty International urges the authorities to follow up on the report's findings, thoroughly investigating denunciations, ranging from extortion to homicide, made against over 200 people – police officers, prison guards, politicians and businessmen – suspected of *milícia* involvement. Every effort must be made to implement the report's recommendations, which include the establishment of an independent body dedicated to investigating police involvement in organized crime; the creation of specific crimes of formation of *milícias* and electoral malpractice in *milícia*-dominated communities; and the demilitarization and disarming of the firefighting service. Amnesty International also urges the authorities to continue providing adequate protection to the members of the inquiry – many of whom have suffered death threats and intimidation as a direct consequence of their work.

An Amnesty International delegation will shortly visit Rio de Janeiro to receive a copy of the report, and will continue to pressure the state and federal governments to implement its recommendations.

Background information

Over the last few years, *milícias* – para-policing groups made up of off-duty police, firemen and soldiers – have taken control of some 170 communities, mainly in the west zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro. They run mafia-like operations, charging a "security tax", seizing control of local businesses such as transport, the sale of gas cylinders and the provision of pirate satellite television, and use violence and intimidation against those who denounce their illegal activities. State deputies, linked to *milícias*, have cordoned off electoral bases, where votes are secured through intimidation and the barring of access to opposition candidates. At least seventeen public officials have received death threats from *milícias* and criminal gangs, including three judges, seven prosecutors, five police chiefs and the head of the parliamentary inquiry into the *milícias*.

In June, the state parliament opened an inquiry into the role of *milícias*. It followed the news that *milícias* controlling the Batan shanty town, in Rio's west zone, abducted and tortured three reporters from the newspaper *O Dia* along with one resident. The inquiry uncovered extensive links between corrupt police officers, *milícias* and state and municipal deputies. As a result of the inquiry several key *milícia* leaders have been imprisoned, including a state deputy. The report will be presented to the state parliament to be voted on at the end of November. Once approved, it will be passed on to the state government, the secretary of public security and the prosecutor's office to continue investigations.

Public Document

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