

Police massacre nine youth in repression of dance in Sao Paulo favela

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Nine people were killed during an action carried out by the Military Police (PM) in a favela in Sao Paulo in the early morning hours Sunday. Among the dead were four adolescents, three 16-year-olds and one 14-year-old.

The youth were at a funk dance—a popular kind of party in Brazil—which was attended by close to 5,000 people, when they were violently attacked by the police. It is still not known if the youth were killed outright in the brutal police attack by or if they were trampled to death. The crowd, corralled by the cops in the narrow streets of the favela, attempted in vain to escape gunfire (there are reports of the police using live ammunition in addition to rubber bullets) along with tear gas and stun grenades.

The barbaric police action in Sao Paulo took place precisely as the government of Brazil's fascist President Jair Bolsonaro is attempting to push through a series of measures to intensify repression. They include an act guaranteeing complete impunity for military personnel acting to "guarantee law and order", which is tantamount to a license to kill.

The Military Police in Sao Paulo, which each year sets a new record in state murders, has clearly understood the message being sent by the president and is already acting in the spirit of the proposed new measures.

The pretext presented by the police for launching the massacre was that they were pursuing criminals, who supposedly entered the funk dance to hide within the crowd. Besides this explanation justifying not a single death, the arguments of the police fall apart in the face of various reports and the testimony given by eye-witnesses.

Several youth have described the police action as an ambush—the military cops prepared a siege of the party,

blocking off all four roads leading in and out of the dance and then began to fire tear gas and brutally attack the crowd. One of the videos of the assault posted on the internet shows police using clubs against youth and repeatedly kicking people knocked to the ground.

A 17-year-old girl who was attacked by a policeman with a glass bottle to the head said, "This time I think that they were really evil, because they closed everything off, no one had anywhere to run."

Another youth said people in the area had grown accustomed to the use of tear gas against the parties, but this time the level of police violence was far worse. "It happens almost every week. But, this time, we were penned in. They were beating us with clubs and bottles, and I would have run. I managed to survive and came to the hospital, but I know that there were several bodies of people who didn't have the same chance as I did."

The mother of one of the youth who died, Denys da Silva, who was 16, believes that her son was murdered by the police. "What I see now is that what happened was a slaughter," she said.

The police repression of these parties is continuous and has intensified, with the use of tear gas and stun grenades as well as rubber bullets becoming routine.

Last year, another police operation to disperse a funk dance in Guarulhos, in the Sao Paulo metropolitan area, ended in the deaths of three people trampled to death when the crowd tried to flee. The dances are attended by poor working class youth, who live in the impoverished neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, where these dances are the only cultural activity available.

The events often times begin spontaneously: a car with loud speakers with a playlist of funk and a stand selling alcoholic beverages rapidly draw youth, and

then more stands selling drinks and more cars with sound equipment come. The dance in which the nine youth were killed over the weekend is known as the “Dz7 Dance”, the biggest in the city of Sao Paulo. According to a spokesperson for the Military Police, there were 250 other dances taking place simultaneously at the time of the killings.

These youth have suffered the most brutal consequences of the generalized social crisis in Brazil. While the overall official unemployment rate in Brazil now stands at roughly 12 percent, for youth between the ages of 18 and 25 it climbs to 24 percent, and among the youngest, between 14 and 17, it reaches 42 percent.

The Dz7 Dance takes place in Paraisópolis, the second largest favela in Sao Paulo, with a population of close to 100,000 people. Some 12,000 of its inhabitants are illiterate or semi-literate. Only 13 percent of the families in Paraisópolis have a monthly income higher than three minimum wages, or the equivalent of R\$ 2.994 (US\$ 680). The community became a symbol of social inequality because of the walls that separate it from the tennis courts, swimming pools and luxury apartment complexes of the adjacent upper-middle-class neighborhood of Morumbi. Life expectancy in areas like Paraisópolis is up to 23 years less than in neighborhoods like Morumbi.

After the night of police terror, residents of the community (as the favelas are also known) organized a demonstration. Relatives and friends of the killed and wounded youth shouted for “justice”, and chanted, “Life yes, death no! Paraisópolis wants an end of the repression!” Another demonstration has been called for later in the week.

The horrific character of the repression in Paraisópolis and its wide coverage in the media has ended up forcing the governor of Sao Paulo, João Dória, to issue a statement of regret over the deaths and promising a “thorough investigation” of the incident. Three years earlier, however, after being elected mayor of Sao Paulo, Dória launched a campaign of repression against the funk dances “The *pancadões* (as these parties are also known, for the beat of the music) are a cancer financed by the PCC,” he said, referring to the criminal organization that controls drug trafficking in Sao Paulo and other states. Last year, he went so far as to ask the Civil Police to use its intelligence division to

identify the organizers of the parties in the city.

Dória, a member of the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party), represents a wing which is driving the party ever more openly into an extreme right-wing direction. In his election campaign for governor, he presented himself as a political partner of Bolsonaro, using the slogan “BolsoDoria”. This slogan was an apt expression for his political trajectory: a transition from a bourgeois party of the center-right to a more right-wing tendency of a fascistic character, which today finds its clearest manifestation in the figure of Bolsonaro. Dória triggered internal crises within the PSDB by declaring his support for Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential elections. More recently, however, he has gone over to criticizing the president, with his eyes already fixed on a run for the presidency in the 2022 elections.

The violence that is today being inflicted upon the poorest layers of the population is a warning of what the ruling class is prepared to do against the working class as a whole in order to guarantee its interests.

Bolsonaro makes no attempt to hide his objectives in this regard. He has stated that the measure granting impunity to the military in carrying out acts of repression is based on the need to suppress protests like those that have gripped Chile for the past two months. Bolsonaro has characterized these mass demonstrations by the working class as “terrorist” actions and says that, if the measure that he proposes is approved, “protest is going to be simply stopped from happening.” The Brazilian bourgeoisie senses the imminence of a social revolt, which is already breaking out across the Latin American continent, and is preparing to drown it in blood.

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