2015 REPORT

The Murder of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Transvestite (LGBT) Persons in Brazil

Images: Tambores de Olokun

"What did I do to you?"
Adriano Cor's last words

GGB – Grupo Gay da Bahia
A tribute to Adriano Cor

Adriano Cor, sua leveza, sua beleza, seu sorriso, sua luz e todo o amor que você sempre emanou serão nosso alento contra as barbarias que temos visto, contra as atrocidades como essa que nos levou você

Adriano Cor, your gentleness, your beauty, your smile, your light and all the love that always emanated from you will be our encouragement facing the barbarisms such as the atrocity which took you away from us.

– Manifesto Cor: Manifesto dos Grupos de Maracatu contra a Homofobia

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And to all LGBT people in Brazil who send us valuable information
THE MURDER OF LGBT PERSONS IN BRAZIL: THE 2015 REPORT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
by Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB), a longstanding Brazilian human rights advocate for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Transvestite persons (LGBT) community

According to data collected by the Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB) and updated daily at the website “QUEM A HOMOTRANSFOBIA MATOU HOJE?” (literally translated: “who did homotransphobia kill today?”), 318 LGBT persons were murdered in Brazil in 2015, one hate crime every 27 hours. Of those 318, 52% were gay, 37% transvestite and transsexual, 16% lesbian, 10% bisexual, 7% were heterosexuals mistakenly believed to have been gay and 1% were heterosexuals who had a transvestite lover (specifically known as t-lovers in Brazil) – as the records show, homophobia kills even non-LGBT individuals. https://homofobiamata.wordpress.com/estatisticas/relatorios/2015-report/

Proportionally transvestites and transsexuals account for the highest number of victims: the risk a trans person to be assassinated is 14 times greater than that of a gay man. The 119 Brazilian trans individuals murdered in 2015 when compared with the 21 homicides of trans persons which occurred in the United States in that same year shows that a Brazilian trans has a nine times greater chance to suffer a violent death than American trans person. According to international agencies more than half of the annual worldwide homicides of trans individuals occur in Brazil. http://www.transrespect-transphobia.org/en_US/tvt-project/tmm-results/idahot-2015.htm
REGIONAL PROFILE

The states with the highest number of LGBT murders in absolute numbers were São Paulo with 55 deaths and Bahia with 33. However if we compare those numbers with the total state of the population, the state of Mato Grosso do Sul is the most homophobic one with 6.49 homicides per million inhabitants; followed by the state of Amazonas with 6.45. For the total population of Brazil the index of LGBT murders is 1.57 per million inhabitants.

There were violent deaths of LGBT persons documented in 187 Brazilian cities, including in small towns like Ibiá, in the state of Bahia, with seven thousand inhabitants. Deaths in rural areas are rare. The most homophobic state capital in 2015 was Manaus, Amazonas with 23 murders – 11.3 deaths per million inhabitants; followed by Porto Velho where five deaths represent 10.1 per million.

One Brazilian transvestite and one Brazilian gay were assassinated abroad, in Spain and in The United States. Also added to the total number were five suicides of male homosexuals.

In regional terms, of the 318 assassinations documented in 2015, the Northeast Region of Brazil continues leading the violence in absolute numbers with 106 deaths, followed by the Southeast Region with 99, the North Region with 50, the Central-West Region with 40 and the South Region with 21. However, if we make a comparison with the total regional population, the North Region was the most homotransphobic with 2.9 murders for each million inhabitants, followed by the Central-West Region with 2.6, the North-East Region with 1.8, the Southwest Region with 1.8, the Southeast Region with 1.1 and the South Region with 0.7 – therefore, the median for Brazil is 1.5 and the Federal District, Brasília, 2.1.

Even though these numbers appear to show a correlation of a higher Human Development Index (HDI) with a lower level of violence, since the South Region and the Southwest Region are regions with a lower occurrence of homophobic murders (0.8 per million in the South Region when compared with the 2.9 in the North Region), the two northern states of Acre and Roraima did not register any LGBT homicides – probably because of the omission by public institutions in releasing such statistics. In the last four years the state of Acre registered three homicides of homosexuals and the state of Roraima registered six.
On the other hand, Porto Velho, the capital of the state of Roraima had the second highest rate of murders with 10.1 per million inhabitants.

According professor Luiz Mott, founder of Grupo Gay da Bahia “Generally speaking, in terms of homophobic crimes, no fixed and predictable trend can be observed since many of its characteristics change inexplicably from year to year. Starting with the total number of crimes: 312 LGBT persons were murdered in Brazil in 2013, that number went up to 326 in 2014, coming down to 318 in 2015. In the state of Bahia an increase of LGBT murders from 25 to 33 was recorded between 2014-2015, while in the state of Rio de Janeiro during that same period the number deaths went down from 22 to 12.” Such inconsistencies can also be observed as far as the different seasons are concerned: In the last four years, the number of murders oscillated between 25 and 45 deaths in the month of January while in August it was between 16 and 34 – with no possible explanation of causation. There are states where on one year more gays are murdered, however in the following year a higher number of trans persons become victims. The only fixed regularity is that in total numbers more gays are killed yearly, followed by trans persons. Until now, lesbian victims have never reached 20%. “Nothing guarantees that the decrease of eight deaths between 2014 and 2015 represents a predictable trend for the coming years, unless public policy and punitive laws are put in place in our country”, affirms professor Mott.

The most shocking of all in terms of an increase in LGBT violence happened in the state of Amazonas where from seven homicides in 2014 that number jumped to 25 in 2015, 23 of those having occurred in the state capital of Manaus, a city with a population of two million inhabitants - while the city of São Paulo which has 12 million inhabitants registered 15 LGBT murders last year.

PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS

Anti-LGBT violence reaches persons of all skin colors, ages, social classes and professions. The youngest victim was 13 years old Michael from the city of Rio Claro, located in the state of São Paulo; she was a brown skinned teen in the process of constructing her feminine performance persona, preferring to dress like a girl – she was found dead on the side of a highway stabbed 15 times. The oldest victim was a renowned medium-priest (of an Afro-Brazilian religion)
from Rio de Janeiro, age 74; he was found gagged, showing signs of physical torture, and he had been clubbed to death – his ex-wife identified him as a homosexual. The highest percentage, 58%, are the deaths of LGBTs under 29 years of age, therefore persons in the prime of live. 21% are under 18 years of age, suggesting early homoerotic initiation, a period of great vulnerability, especially in the case of transvestites and transsexuals active as professional sex workers.

As far as the skin color of murdered LGBTs, 55% were white, 45% black – and slightly contrary to the demographical profile Brazil, transsexuals and transvestites as a general rule come from the poorer social strata, accentuating a little further this same racial tendency, with 57% being white and 43% being black and brown skinned. Do sex clients prefer lighter skinned transvestites?

Among all murdered LGBTs, professional sex workers in the majority with 26 deaths, followed by hair dressers with 16, teachers 11, students 10, male priest of Afro-Brazilian religions 3, evangelical pastors 2, catholic priests 1; also included were trade’s people, public servants, lawyers, a dancer, one homeless person, etc.

In relation to causa mortis, the same pattern of previous years persists: Executions with cold weapons predominate with 37%, followed by firearms with 32%, also including cases of death by beating, clubbing, stoning and poisoning. Transvestites in most cases are killed on the side of public roads (56%), as victims of fire arms; while gays and lesbians are usually killed inside their home (36%), in most cases with knives or other domestic objects used as weapons, otherwise they die inside public establishments (8%). Here are some examples of typical hate crimes, many preceded with acts of torture, with the use of multiple instruments and an excessive number of blows: Bachelor’s degree holder Helmiton Figueiredo, 30 years old, from Cabo de Santo Agostinho, state of Pernambuco, was killed with 60 knife stabbings; Inácio José da Silva, 30 years old, from Santa Cruz do Capibaribe, Pernambuco, shot 13 times. The exceptional use of cruelty characterizes a great number of these hate crimes against “queers”: Bruno C. Xavier was butchered and placed in cement in his apartment in Diadema, São Paulo; Pablo Garcez, a mason 35 years old, from Manaus, had his torso and arms chopped off; Cícero Miguel dos Santos, age 41, from Sertãozinho, Paraíba state, had his body made full of holes and with a knife an X was engraved on his back; transvestite Laura Vermont, 18 years old, was followed by an automobile through the streets of the city of São Paulo and
later beat to death while the police of the Zona Leste city district, although fully aware of what was happening, chose not to intervene – this is all recorded in video; Andréia Pereira, age 40, lesbian, a cook in Guarujá, São Paulo, was beaten to death by three men – witnesses reported: ‘It was not a robbery because they beat her a lot, fracturing bones, the bones in her face and her neck, leaving her completely disfigured and unrecognizable”. The chief of police responsible acknowledged that “it is not normal to see so much brutality in crimes of this type against women”. These are indeed hate crimes.

IMPUNITY

Crimes committed against sexual minorities usually occur at night or before dawn, in secluded places or inside a home, making it difficult to identify the perpetrators. When there are witnesses, in many occasions they refuse to testify because deep seated prejudice against LGBT people. The police express their own homotransphobia by ignoring these types of crimes, denying without good reason the presence of homophobia in such criminal cases.

Only in 1/4 of these homicides were the perpetrator(s) identified (94 of 318); and less then 10% of them resulted in investigation and persecution of the assassin(s). Impunity serves as a stimulus for future attacks.

Among the 94 identified perpetrators, the younger one was 14 years old and the oldest one was 63; however most murderers are young. 16% were under 18 years of age and 87% of them were under 29 years old. Four minors stoned a trans person in Araraquara, São Paulo. Four women killed an unidentified gay man in Barra dos Coqueiros, in the urban area of Aracaju. Also four minors killed by stoning a teenager in Araraquara, the capital city of the state of Sergipe. Newspaper reporting these cases only identify the profession of 23 of these murderers: Five were “michês” (male prostitutes), five were house painters, four were members of the military police, two were truck drivers, there was also a motorcycle-taxi driver, a lawyer and a homeless person.
CONTROVERSIAL CRIMES

Should all of these 318 murders be seen as actual homophobic crimes? Professor Mott is unequivocal: “99% of these homicides against LGBT persons do have a motive, either the crime-committing perpetrator has an individualized, personalized anti-LGBT sentiment within himself (i.e. when the perpetrator has an unresolved issue with his own sexuality) or he is acting out in response, according to the dominant cultural homotransphobia (for example, when young transvestites are shunned to the outskirts of society where violence is endemic), or institutionalized homophobia (when governments do not offer protection in spaces usually utilized by members of the LGBT community, nor approve laws incriminating acts of LGBTphobia). Even when a trans person is involved in illegal activities – drugs, stealing – his/her queer identity increases manifold the level of violence he or she will suffer as a consequence. From North to South in Brazil one can hear the expression: “What fags really need is to die!” and fathers and mothers repeat the same refrain after Brazilian right-wing representative Jair Bolsonaro, “I rather have a dead son than a son who is a homosexual!” A recently approved femicide law (i.e. sexual/gender hate crimes) unjustly left out transsexual women from its protective scope.

The president of the Grupo Gay da Bahia, historian Marcelo Cerqueira, further adds: “When the Afro-Brazilian Movement or the feminists lay out their statistics, nobody seems to question if the motive of death was racism or sexism, so why should the LGBT community have to prove that there was ideological hate behind every hideous anti-LGBT crime committed? Just by being a trans person, a lesbian or a gay man in our society already determines that so much is stacked against you in our country!”

According to Eduardo Michels from the city of Rio de Janeiro, systems analyst and data collection manager for this project, “The underrepresentation of these crimes is notorious, indicating that the numbers we have are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to all the violence and blood that actually exists, since our data bank is built based on newspaper clippings and internet contacts. Unfortunately we rarely get any information from the more than 300 nonprofit LGBT organizations in Brazil. And the Secretaria Nacional de Direitos Humanos (National Human Rights Secretariat) and the Disk 100 project have proven time and again their incompetence in documenting lethal violence against the Brazilian LGBT population. The numbers we present here certainly
must fall way under real daily life situations. Especially in the last few years when more and more family members of victims, when police administrators and police officers with bias and prejudice have been disregarding the presence of homophobia in many of these anti-LGBT homicides”.

Professor Mott adds: “Unfortunately, anti-homosexual violence in Brazil is growing out of control. During the eight years of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s administration there were 1023 homophobic crimes documented, on average 127 per year; during the Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva government the number of LGBT murders went up to 1306, therefore an average of 163 assassinations per year, and while Dilma Rousseff has been in power these types of crimes reached the all time high of 1561, an average of 312 per annum – double the average in previous federal administrations. Therefore, more than ever it is urgent that president Rousseff steps up to fulfill her last presidential campaign promise of criminalizing homophobia.”

The new year starts even more homophobic: As of January of 2016, within 28 days, already 30 murders of LGBT persons have been documented, one killing every 22 hours!

LIST OF VICTIMS

Please see the list of the names of all 318 victims:

For more information and interviews:
55 (71) 991289993 (WhatsApp)

Please see full text with visual aids here:
http://homofobiamata.wordpress.com/
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