
Brazil Home to World's 3rd Largest Prison Population, Highest Incarceration Rate

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With over 725,000 inmates, [Brazil](#) is home to the world's third largest prison population. With these figures, the South American country is surpassed only by the United States, with a prison population of 2.1 million, and China, with a population of 1.6 million.

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Despite achieving this unsavory accomplishment a report published by the Pastoral of Prisoners shows Brazil's penal system only has the capacity to properly accommodate half of the prisoners it currently holds.

"Even with the mass construction of prisons since the 1990s, it (Brazil) has not been able to deal with the large number of imprisoned people during this period," said Rodolfo Valente, researcher and head of the Pastoral of Prisoners report.

"The incarceration rate is so intense that overcrowding, in truth, is likely to worsen despite the newly built prisons on a regular basis. This only foments, even more,

the trivialization of prisons and their barbarism."

Titled the "Anti-Prison Struggle in the Contemporary World: A Study on Experiences of Prison Population Reduction in Other Nations," the study reveals that Brazil is the only country in the top six where the number of persons incarcerated has been on an intense and constant increase since the 1980s.

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Researchers believe that Brazil should radically reduce its prison population to avoid tragedies such as riots and the death of prisoners and guards. One suggestion is to reduce jail time for those who commit crimes that don't result in serious injury and allow defendants to await their trial dates outside of prisons.

According to Pastoral of Prisoners, almost half of Brazil's entire prison population have not received a final conviction or sentencing, a similar number are incarcerated for non-violent crimes and more than 30 percent are in prison, as a result, small drug possession or property crimes.

"A change in the [drug laws](#) is particularly important because a third of all prisoners are in jail due to (small amounts of) drug trafficking," said Michael Mohallem, a professor of human rights at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.
