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Brazil: Security situation and criminal groups, including the First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital, PCC); areas of influence of the PCC and their ability to track individuals throughout Brazil; state protection (2018-July 2023)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

1.1 Security Situation in Brazil

The Government of Canada's travel advisory indicates that Brazil has "high crime rates and regular incidents of gang-related and other violence in urban areas" (Canada 2023-06-16). According to the same source, crime rates are "highest in urban centres, particularly in areas adjacent to [the] impoverished neighbourhoods" of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília, Recife, and Salvador (Canada 2023-06-16). A report by the US Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) states that "Brazil experiences more murders than any other country, and its murder rate is among the world's twenty highest" (US 2021-09-11). Concerning drug-related crime, the same source notes the following:

Brazil is the second-largest powder cocaine consumer in the world, behind the United States, the largest crack cocaine consumer, and a heavy cocaine importer. The critical crime rates in Brazil's major cities are inextricably tied to the country's drug trade, from common street assaults by addicts, to wars between drug cartels that manifest violently in the prison systems and marginalized communities. All of Brazil's major cities experience the effects of drug use. In 2020, the national homicide tally in Brazil exceeded 50,000, a dynamic largely attributed to the drug trade.

A large proportion of crimes have a nexus to narcotics. Drug use contributes to criminal activity (e.g., street assaults, robberies) to support addictions. Several Brazilian cities are transshipment points for illicit drugs, especially cocaine, to Europe and Africa. Locally produced cocaine and marijuana also flow in illegal distribution routes within South America (Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay are the most common routes). Ecstasy is also common. (US 2021-09-11)

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a US-based NGO which collects and analyzes data on "political violence" and "protest events" globally (ACLED n.d.), "the

highest levels of violence targeting local government officials" have been observed in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, states that are respectively considered as the home of the Red Command (Comando Vermelho, CV) and the PCC, the two "most significant organized crime groups in the country" (ACLED 2023-06-22).

1.2 Gangs

1.2.1 CV

Sources indicate that the CV ["Brazil's oldest criminal group" (InSight Crime 2022-07-17)] originated in the 1970s [or 1979 (AQ 2021, 35)] in a Rio de Janeiro prison (Insight Crime 2022-07-17; AQ 2021, 35). The same sources state that the CV remains based in Rio de Janeiro (Insight Crime 2022-07-17; AQ 2021, 35), with InSight Crime further noting that it has a "presence" in São Paulo, Amazonas and Mato Grosso states, and outside of Brazil, in countries including Paraguay and Bolivia (InSight Crime 2022-07-17). According to *Americas Quarterly* (AQ), a New York-based publication focusing on politics, business and culture in the Americas (AQ n.d.), the criminal activities of CV include drug trafficking, kidnapping, extortion and weapons smuggling (AQ 2021, 35). For further information on the CV, see Response to Information Request BRA106243 of April 2019.

1.2.2 Pure Third Command (Terceiro Comando Puro)

InSight Crime indicates that the Pure Third Command is a criminal group based in Rio de Janeiro, where "their territorial control is strongest in the North and West zones" and where their "traditional strongholds include the neighborhoods of Ilha do Governador, Senador Camará and Complexo da Maré" (2018-04-26). According to the same source, "the group functions as a loose horizontal coalition of local crime bosses who forge alliances based on mutually beneficial interests" and many of their

top leaders have avoided being arrested "by employing an effective system of lookouts and paying bribes to both civil and military police officers" (InSight Crime 2018-04-26).

1.2.3 Friends of Friends (Amigos dos Amigos, ADA)

According to InSight Crime, the ADA is a criminal group based in Rio de Janeiro, where their "main area of operations is Rocinha," a *favela* [shanty town] situated in the southern area of the city (2018-03-30).

1.2.4 Family of the North (Família do Norte, FDN)

According to InSight Crime, the FDN is present in the state of Amazonas where it controls "most cities, municipalities and the border region" (2020-03-05). The same source, citing Brazil's Public Prosecutor Office, indicates that while the FDN "has long been Brazil's third-largest criminal group," they fall short of matching the "nationwide presence" of the PCC and CV despite their "strong presence in northern Brazil" (InSight Crime 2020-03-05). In contrast, in an article co-written with American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies (CLALS) [1], InSight Crime states that the FDN "may be the second largest criminal organization in Brazil, with as many as 13,000 members" (InSight Crime & CLALS 2020-12, 52).

1.2.5 Guardians of the State (Guardiões do Estado, GDE)

InSight Crime and CLALS indicates that the GDE is a criminal group "with roots in the northeastern state of Ceará" (2020-12, 13-14). In an interview for VICE News' News on Drugs series, Niko Vorobyov, a freelance journalist and author who covers the global drug trade, similarly stated that the GDE is based in Brazil's northeast, "around Fortaleza," the state capital of Ceará (VICE 2022, 4:23-4:28).

1.2.6 Bullet in the Face (Bala na Cara, BNC)

According to InSight Crime, BNC is "a prominent criminal group headquartered in Brazil's southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul, but with a presence in southern Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina" (2021-07-27). Sources note that the BNC controls the drug trade [or "cocaine distribution" (US 2021-09-11)] in Porto Alegre (InSight Crime 2021-07-27; US 2021-09-11).

1.3 Militias

A 2021 report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) indicates that paramilitary groups, known as militias, are "criminal gangs comprise policemen or former police" (OAS 2021-02-12, para. 285). According to ACLED, police militias have become "[n]arco militias" that have entered the "lucrative narcotics business in Rio de Janeiro since around the 2010s" (2023-02-14). Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's public international broadcaster, indicates that "militias are dedicated to extortion, collecting protection money, controlling the supply of gas, public transport, access to cable television, rented property; they also organize illegal gambling, control the drug and weapons trade and even operate illegal mining" (2019-04-09). Citing a federal police map, the same source notes that militias are "represented" in 18 states of Brazil's 26 federal states (DW 2019-04-09).

InSight Crime states that Escritório do Crime is "one of the largest and most powerful militia groups" in Rio de Janeiro (2021-08-13). Further information on Escritório do Crime and information on other militias could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. PCC

Sources describe the PCC as a "prison gang" (Reuters 2019-01-07; US 2021-09-11; InSight Crime & CLALS 2020-12, 6). Sources note that it emerged in the 1990s in the prisons of São Paulo (Reuters 2021-12-15; ACLED n.d.; InSight Crime 2020-03-09). Sources indicate that it is Brazil's "largest" criminal organization (InSight Crime 2020-03-09; ACLED n.d.; US 2021-09-11) or the country's "most powerful" criminal organization (Reuters 2021-12-15).

According to InSight Crime, in the early 2010s, the PCC had "more than 11,000 members across much of Brazil with multimillion-dollar monthly revenues"; in 2020 the group "is believed to have members in all the country's states" and to have "expanded its operations internationally" (2020-03-09). In a 2021 report, AQ indicates that estimates for PCC members range from 8,000 to "more than" 30,000 (2021, 34). *La Prensa Latina*, a Memphis-based newspaper providing local, national and international news coverage to "keep the Latin community informed" (La Prensa Latina Media n.d.), cites a prosecutor investigating gang crimes in Sao Paulo as indicating that the gang has "more than" 30,000 "baptized" members (*La Prensa Latina* 2022-06-10).

The *Economist* cites Gabriel Feltran, a sociologist who has studied the group, as indicating that "the PCC has set itself up as an alternative form of government" and "[m]any poorer Brazilians 'feel they can trust the PCC more than the state'" (2022-05-14). Graham Denyer Willis, who has studied the PCC and who also works at the University of Cambridge, similarly indicated in an interview with AQ that the "system of rules and justice" imposed by the PCC is perceived as "'deeply legitimate'" by PCC members and "many communities" due to a "severe crisis of confidence in Brazil's traditional institutions" (AQ 2018-01-16).

According to the *Economist*, the PCC provides "loans, weapons and a network of contacts to help illicit enterprises flourish" (2022-05-14). Feltran indicated to the *Economist* that "the group created its own parallel

court system in which to settle disputes" to end the gang wars of 1990s (*The Economist* 2022-05-14). The same source notes that the group has members known as *disciplinas* who punishes those who break their rules, including with "beatings" (*The Economist* 2022-05-14).

2.1 Activities

Sources report that the PCC's activities include drug trafficking and arms trading (InSight Crime 2020-03-09; Reuters 2023-03-22; BBC 2021-05-11). According to InSight Crime and CLALS, "[m]embers of the PCC are active in almost all criminal markets. But its traditional strength has been in the drug market, where its activities are facilitated by the strength of longstanding contraband and arms smuggling routes" (2020-12, 31).

Reuters states that the PCC has also developed "increasingly sophisticated methods to launder money" (2023-03-22). AQ indicates that a single PCC money-laundering operation, which was dismantled by Brazilian police in 2020, "moved" US\$6.6 billion over four years (2021, 34).

AQ notes that the PCC is involved in "cocaine trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, ATM robberies, and large-scale assaults on businesses and banks" (2018-01-16). According to a 2021 organized crime index published by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), "an independent civil-society organization, headquartered in Geneva" (GI-TOC n.d.) the PCC's activities consist of drug sales, extortion and supply of public services "in marginalized areas," bank and car robberies, kidnappings and money laundering, as well as wielding influence through corrupt officials (GI-TOC 2021-09-28, 4). The *Economist* reports that the PCC is "involved in everything from petty crime to international drug-smuggling" and "was behind the beheading and killing of dozens of inmates in various prisons" in 2017 (2022-05-14).

Sources note that the PCC is involved in illegal mining on the Yanomami Indigenous territory in the northern state of Roraima (InSight Crime 2023-05-26; Al Jazeera 2021-06-14; *The Guardian* 2023-06-01).

Sources report that in March 2023 the police stopped a PCC plot to kidnap and murder government officials; the police operation involved 120 police officers serving search-and-seizure and arrest warrants in the states of Sao Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul, Parana, and Rondonia (Reuters 2023-03-22; Al Jazeera 2023-03-22). According to *La Prensa Latina*, the "most prominent" of the targets of the plot was Senator Sergio Moro, who was the Minister of Justice under the Bolsonaro administration (2023-03-22). The same source also reports that the PCC "has been accused of being behind the May 2022 assassination of Paraguay's top anti-mafia prosecutor, Marcelo Pecci" (*La Prensa Latina* 2023-03-22).

3. Structures and Leaders

3.1 Structures

InSight Crime indicates that the "PCC organizes itself with strong independent local leadership working through a franchise system instead of being dependant on a vertical hierarchy" (2020-03-09). InSight Crime and CLALS state that while the PCC "appears loosely organized locally," they have "a series of higher-level coordinating bodies with authority over members, known as the *sintonias*" (2020-12, 15). Similarly, AQ cites the former attorney general of São Paulo as stating that the PCC leadership is divided among *sintonias*, with each responsible for an activity, such as drug sales, bank robberies or money laundering (2021, 34). InSight Crime and CLALS note that there is "little consensus" as to what constitutes a *sintonia* among "law enforcement circles," but identifies "four broad types," which have been referred to "under various names" over the course of the PCC's history (2020-12, 16). These four broad types of *sintonia* are illustrated in a May 2020 InSight Crime table, cited in InSight Crime and CLALS' joint report:

Organizing Principle	Sintonias [2]	Function
Leadership	<i>Resumo Geral (Final Geral)</i>	Board of directors of the organization
	<i>Da Rua</i>	Leaders on the street
	<i>São Paulo</i>	Board of directors in the state of São Paulo
	<i>Estados e Países</i>	Board of directors managing operations outside of São Paulo and Brazil
Serving prisoners needs	<i>Gravatas</i>	Obtains lawyers and legal defense for members and allies
	<i>Ajuda</i>	Assists families with small expenses
	<i>Apoio</i>	Provides mutual assistance for prisoners
	<i>Ônibus</i>	Obtains funds for family to travel and visits relatives in distant prisons
Administration	<i>Cadastro</i>	Keeps registry of members and record of service
	<i>Cebola</i>	Manages monthly quotas from members outside of jail
	<i>Rifa</i>	Manages prison raffles to raise money
	<i>Financeira</i>	Manages finances of the organization
	<i>Disciplina</i>	Regulates violence and administers internal justice system
Criminal economy	<i>Progresso</i>	Manages cocaine trafficking
	<i>Padaria</i>	Manages microtrafficking
	<i>Cigarros</i>	Administers contraband cigarette trade
	<i>Bob Esponja</i>	Marijuana committee
	<i>Armas</i>	Obtains and administers weapons

(InSight Crime & CLALS 2020-12, 17).

InSight Crime and CLALS note that "[a]t the top of the organization, the PCC is a pyramidal, hierarchical group...But as one progresses down to street level, the PCC becomes more unstructured" (2020-12, 16). AQ indicates that the PCC "has been run like a multinational corporation for the past two decades" (2021, 34).

According to AQ, membership in the organization "requires multiple sponsors and a small monthly fee for imprisoned members, and heftier dues for members on the streets" (2021, 34). InSight Crime and CLALS note that members who have been released from prison are to "pay dues, carry out personal favors, participate in criminal activities and administer discipline, among other tasks" (2020-12, 18).

3.2 Leaders

Insight Crime and CLALS state the following:

The PCC's top leader by authority and reputation is Marcola [Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho], and many of his potential rivals have been systematically eliminated over the years. But Marcola is no longer the sole decision-maker or even necessarily essential to the day-to-day operation of the PCC as a criminal organization. Instead, at the top of the organization, the PCC's *sintonias* help to ensure that leadership is institutionalized rather than personalized, and they have guaranteed a certain continuity in the organization over time despite leadership turnover. (2020-12, 16)

A March 2020 Insight Crime article notes that Marcola operates from prison and "is serving a two-decade drug trafficking sentence" (2020-03-09). The same source indicates that the PCC second-in-command is Abel Pacheco, alias Vida Loka, who is in jail while awaiting trial for murder, as of March 2020 (InSight Crime 2020-03-09). A July 2022 InSight Crime article notes that Gilberto Aparecido Dos Santos, alias Fuminho, is identified by Brazilian authorities "as the PCC's second-in-command and top member not behind bars" (2022-07-18). In an April

2020 article, InSight Crime reports that Fuminho "was one of Brazil's most-wanted criminals" before he was arrested in Mozambique in 2020 (2020-04-13).

Citing G1, a Brazilian news portal belonging to Grupo Globo, InSight Crime notes that Marcola's brother Alejandro Juvenal Herbas Camacho Júnior, alias Marcolinha, continues to assist with oversight of PCC operations from prison (InSight Crime 2022-07-18). Citing TNH1, another Brazilian portal news headquartered in Maceió, state of Alagoas, the same source indicates that Marcos Roberto de Almeida, alias Tuta, "appears to be the PCC's leader outside prison, having reportedly been handpicked by Marcola" (InSight Crime 2022-07-18).

InSight Crime indicates that two PCC founding members, Jose Marcio Felicio, alias Geleirão and César Augusto Roriz da Silva, alias Cesinha, were ejected from the organization in 2002 and created a rival gang, the Third Capital Command (Terceiro Comando da Capital, TCC) (2020-03-09). The same source reports that the PCC "lost several top leaders" between 2017 and 2018 (InSight Crime 2020-03-09).

4. Areas of Operation

4.1 Brazil

Sources report that the PCC has presence and operations throughout Brazil (InSight Crime & CLALS 2020-12, 13; AQ 2021, 34; Coutinho 2019-02-19, 62), but its base remains in the city of São Paulo (InSight Crime 2020-03-09; AQ 2021, 34). According to InSight Crime and CLALS, "[a]s the PCC has moved both to dominate Brazilian markets and to profit from drug smuggling beyond Brazil, it is increasingly moving into" the land and coastal border areas (2020-12, 36). A 2023 report on drugs published by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), citing media reports, indicates that drug trafficking groups, including the PCC, have "infiltrated multiple illegal mining operations, offering 'protection', extorting 'taxes', and controlling pits and

dredging machinery" (UN 2023-06-26, 70). According to the Wilson Center, a non-partisan global policy think tank chartered by the US Congress (Wilson Center n.d.), the PCC "operates in all 27 states" of Brazil (Wilson Center 2019-08-30).

4.2 International

Sources indicate that the PCC is also present in Paraguay, Bolivia (InSight Crime 2020-03-09; Berg 2022-11-16; AQ 2021, 34), Colombia and Peru (Berg 2022-11-16; AQ 2021, 34). InSight Crime and CLALS state in their 2020 report that the "PCC is now believed to have members in every prison in Paraguay" (2020-12, 15). *La Prensa Latina*, citing a prosecutor in São Paulo, reports that the PCC has a "particularly strong" presence in Bolivia and Paraguay and adds that in Paraguay "the gang dominates that nation's prison system and also uses its foothold there to control that nation's triple border with Argentina and Brazil" (2022-06-10). According to the same source, "[t]he PCC now focuses almost exclusively on international drug trafficking" and "has formed alliances with powerful European drug-trafficking organizations" (*La Prensa Latina* 2020-06-10). InSight Crime states that "[i]n recent years, the PCC has expanded its activities internationally, developing operations in nearly every country in South America in addition to establishing ties with European crime groups," and that Paraguay has "become an important stronghold for the Brazilian organization" (2020-03-09). AQ states that in addition to Brazil and Europe, the PCC has buyers in North Africa and Lebanon, while "[i]ts footprint in Uruguay and Argentina is debated" (2021, 34). Leonardo Coutinho, a Brazilian journalist, citing *O Globo* [a Brazilian newspaper] in his February 2019 article published in *PRISM* [3], indicates that "the Brazilian Federal Police have detected links between PCC and Hezbollah in drug trafficking operations" through which the PCC is able "to reach drug markets already familiar to or dominated by Hezbollah, including many in Africa and the Middle East" (Coutinho 2019-02-19, 64). Additionally, sources note an alliance between PCC and the

Italian organized crime syndicate Ndrangheta (*La Prensa Latina* 2020-06-10; InSight Crime 2023-01-16; OCCRP 2021-08-05), in trafficking cocaine to Europe (InSight Crime 2023-01-16; OCCRP 2021-08-05).

5. Rivals and Allies

InSight Crime and CLALS state that "[t]he PCC has sought hegemony in most of the areas where it operates. As a consequence, conflict with rival groups while it establishes this hegemony has become common" (2020-12, 46). The same source categorizes the PCC's rivals and allies in Brazil as follows:

Groups that support the PCC	Area	Groups that oppose the PCC	Area
GDE	Ceará	CV	Rio de Janeiro, Amazonas and Mato Grosso do Sul
Bonde dos 13	Acre	FDN (allied to CV until May 2018)	Amazonas
Bonde dos 30	Pará	First Catarinense Group (Primeiro Grupo Catarinense)	Santa Catarina
United States (Estados Unidos)	Paraíba	Sindicato do Crime (has links to FDN)	Rio Grande do Norte
ADA	Rio de Janeiro	Streetcar of the 40 (Bonde dos 40)	Maranhão
Pure Third Command	São Paulo	Okaida	Paraíba
First Command of Maranhão (Primeiro Comando do Maranhão)	Maranhão	Brazilian Revolutionary Command Crime (Comando Revolucionário Brasileiro da Criminalidade, CRBC)	São Paulo
		Primeira Guerrilha do Norte	Pará

5.1 Rivals

5.1.1 CV

According to sources, the CV and PCC were long time allies, until a break in the alliance occurred in 2016 (InSight Crime 2022-07-17; AQ 2021, 35).

5.1.2 FDN

Citing Universo Online (UOL), a Brazilian news site, InSight Crime indicates that the FDN forged an alliance with CV in 2015 "[i]n order to prevent the spread of the PCC in the North" (InSight Crime 2020-03-05). According to an article by Ryan C. Berg, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and an adjunct professor at the Catholic University of America who studies Latin American criminal groups, the FDN controls criminal activities in Amazonas state as an ally of the CV (2022-11-16).

5.2 Allies

5.2.1 Pure Third Command

InSight Crime indicates that the gang "may be partnering up" with the PCC to "challenge the Red Command's dominance in Rio de Janeiro" (2018-04-26). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5.2.2 ADA

According to InSight Crime, citing unnamed "security experts" consulted in 2017, ADA "may have partnered" with the PCC, which was "reportedly trying to weaken the control of its rival, the Red Command, in Rio de Janeiro" (2018-03-30).

5.2.3 GDE

According to InSight Crime and CLALS, citing articles from *O Globo* and *El País*, the GDE became an ally of the PCC in 2017; "this alliance helped the PCC to push back against a joint effort by the CV and the [FDN] to expand in Brazil's northern states, and to control northern smuggling routes that served as an alternative to the southern Bolivia-Paraguay-Brazil routes" (2020-12, 13-14).

5.2.4 BNC

According to the OSAC, BNC has connections to the PCC (US 2021-09-11). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. PCC's Ability to Track Individuals Throughout Brazil

Information on the ability of the PCC to track individuals throughout Brazil was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Concerning the connection between the PCC and Brazilian politicians, InSight Crime and CLALS state that

there has been little evidence of corruption and collusion between high-ranking political elites and the PCC, and PCC corruption of government [o]fficials appears to be limited to the grassroots level of prison officials and police officers. Efforts by the PCC to expand into the political arena appear to have been relatively minor. There have been reports that a corrupt network involved in building São Paulo's beltway may have made payments to local PCC members to help push through land expropriations and perhaps even to intimidate witnesses. There are allegations that the spouses of PCC members have sought to participate in public procurement. There is a well-publicized case of a mayor, Ney

Santos, in the São Paulo municipality of Embu whose first campaign was allegedly financed in part by the PCC. But these appear, so far at least, to be somewhat happenstance forays into politics, rather than a strategically calculated effort to corrupt or penetrate the state or federal political system. The PCC's interest in participating in politics is clearly limited to tactical rather than strategic aims: buying protection, easing the burdens of prison life, and perhaps encouraging prison officials to turn a blind eye, rather than obtaining high-level protection. (InSight Crime & CLALS 2020-12, 49, footnote omitted)

AQ indicates the following:

Several investigations show the group has allegedly bought support from individuals in the judiciary system. The police also investigated cases of politicians who had to ask for permission from local PCC leaders to campaign in areas under the group's control. In 2020, multiple candidates for town council and mayor were suspected of PCC ties and even membership. (2021, 34)

7. State Protection

Information on state protection was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Brazilian Report, an English-language news site that covers current issues in Brazil and provides commentary and analysis (The Brazilian Report n.d.), in its July 2020 article notes that Brazilian police from 11 states "launched a massive sting operation comprising 212 arrest and search-and-seizure warrants targeting" PCC members and to dismantle a new faction based in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul (The Brazilian Report 2020-07-28). Similarly, Diálogo Américas (Diálogo), "a digital military magazine" published by the US Southern Command (Diálogo n.d.), indicates that a joint operation conducted by the Brazilian Federal Police and the Paraguayan National Anti-Drug Secretariat was

carried out in cities of both countries, which resulted in the capture of four leaders of the PCC (Diálogo 2021-11-09). According to the same source, among the four leaders arrested was William Meira do Nascimento, alias Brujo, who "is likely part of the PCC's core command structure" (Diálogo 2021-11-09).

7.1 Policy Responses

InSight Crime and CLALS state that "the Brazilian response to rising crime, and especially organized crime, has been slow, weak, and in many ways, self-defeating"; the same source writes that there are "several overlapping explanations" for this, and provides the following observations:

1. "Weak" coordination among various state agencies, which has "complicated the elaboration of a strategic national response to crime, and lessened authorities' ability to react to evolving threats that cross jurisdictional boundaries";
2. Increased imprisonment as "the only uniform public policy response to rising crime," which has "contributed to the increasing virulence of criminal organizations";
3. Criminal organizations spreading to other prisons and jurisdictions as the "unintended side effect" of efforts to control prison gangs, which leads to criminal organizations spreading "within states, across states, and ... across national boundaries";
4. A "significant share of prisoners nationwide are in jail as a consequence of drug laws," resulting in "a steady flow of vulnerable prisoners whose need for prison protection may encourage them to either become gang members or at least tacitly support criminal organizations";
5. Racial and class inequalities within the criminal justice system leading to support for "anti-system criminal organizations"; and
6. Tough on crime politics and the "demonization of human rights" contributing to "bad policy and bad policing" (InSight Crime & CLALS 2020-12, 54-59).

Coutinho explains the government's attempts to dismantle the criminal gang as follows:

The government's strategy to dismantle PCC was to deny its existence and separate its leaders by transferring them to prisons in other cities and states.

That policy of separation failed. By sending "graduate" members of the PCC to other parts of the country, the government unwittingly helped the PCC to expand its domain throughout Brazil. These transferred inmates served as "ambassadors" of the organization wherever they went. Many were from the largest and richest of the Brazilian states and came with experience in organizational innovation which greatly exceeded the local gangs. They represented an organization that was able to provide protection beyond the prison walls and São Paulo state borders. (Coutinho 2019-02-19, 58)

7.2 Witness Protection Program

Citing a note submitted by the government of Brazil, the IACHR states the following about the Brazil's witness protection program:

[I]n order to guarantee the effectiveness of criminal investigations or prosecutions Brazil has instituted in 2009 the Program for the Protection of Victims and Threatened Witnesses (PROVITA). The program guarantees protection to those persons who have been coerced or exposed to violence in the framework of a judicial process. As reported, the program works in 13 units of the federation and was responsible for the protection of around 900 people in 2018. In addition, the program was complemented, with the National Victims and Witness Information System (SISNAVT), to receive information from those involved in the protection process. (OAS 2021-02-12, para 385)

Danielle Annoni [4] and Andrea Maria Calazans Pacheco Pacífico [5], however, state that PROVITA is "ineffectiv[e]," noting that the police's involvement in the "decision-making process and operation" of the

program, coupled with issues of police "corruption" in Brazil, "could lead to an information leak and a serious security risk for those protected" (Annoni & Pacheco Pacífico 2022-01, 110). The same source further notes that under PROVITA "the responsibilities of protection and assistance to victims and witnesses are shared between [NGOs] and states through agreements," and write that this "decentralization of protective measures," "discharges the State from a task that in principle is its duty by law " (Annoni & Pacheco Pacífico 2022-01, 111). In an article in the *Journal of the British Academy*, a peer-review journal run by the British Academy (British Academy n.d.), Steffen Jensen and Tobias Kelly indicate that PROVITA "faced severe budgetary constraints and is only available to survivors willing or able to take part in criminal proceedings" (Jensen & Kelly 2022-05-10, 13).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Center for Latin American & Latino Studies (CLALS) is a multidisciplinary center of the American University at Washington DC whose studies focus on "Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latino communities in the United States" (American University n.d.).

[2] According to the joint report by Insight Crime and CLALS, the *sintonias* "vary from place to place" (2020-12). The names provided in the chart by the same source are "some of the names and descriptions provided to InSight Crime by Brazilian law enforcement or taken from judicial or intelligence documents" (Insight Crime & CLALS 2020-12).

[3] *PRISM* is a journal published by the National Defense University Press (NDU Press), a Washington, DC-based "professional military and academic publishing house" (NDU Press n.d.)

[4] Danielle Annoni is a full professor at Universidade Federal do Paraná's law school in Curitiba, Paraná (Annoi & Pacheco Pacífico 2022-01, 107).

[5] Andrea María Calazans Pacheco Pacífico is a full professor at the international relations school of Universidade Estadual de Paraíba in Brazil (Annoi & Pacheco Pacífico 2022-01, 107).

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