

# 25 INMATES KILLED IN BRAZIL PRISON CLASH

**SAO PAULO:** At least 25 inmates died Sunday in clashes between two rival factions in a prison in far northern Brazil, the latest episode of violence shaking the country's underfunded and overcrowded prison system. Seven of the dead were beheaded and six burned to death in fighting at a prison in Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima state, the news site G1 reported, citing local police. The bloodshed began when inmates of one wing of the Agrícola de Monte Cristo prison broke into another wing.

Prisoners were armed with knives and wooden clubs, an inmate's wife who was in the prison when the riot broke out told G1. Roraima state Secretary of Justice Uziel Castro said that the fight erupted during visiting hours, and some 100 relatives of inmates were briefly held hostage. The rioters demanded that a judge come to hear their demands. Instead, Special Operations Police stormed the prison, released the hostages and regained control of the site by sundown. "All the hostages were released," Castro said,

adding that most of them were women. The prison, some 3,400 kilometers (2,100 miles) northwest of Rio de Janeiro, is in a state that borders Venezuela and Guyana.

### Violent, overcrowded

Joana Moura, head of the union of Roraima penal workers, told the Folha de Boa Vista newspaper that the incident "is a reflection of the lack of interest from the state government" towards the prison system. According to Moura, "there is no security equipment, there are not enough per-

sonnel for the tasks, and the agents are working beyond their limits." Officials from the coroner's office were in the prison to take out the bodies, the newspaper reported. Fights and riots are frequent throughout Brazil's overcrowded prison system. As of the end of 2014, there were 622,000 people imprisoned in Brazil, according to a Ministry of Justice report, which added that most of the prisoners are black males. Brazil has the world's fourth largest prison population, the report said, after the United States, China and Russia.

Human Rights groups have long complained about the deplorable conditions in Brazilian prisons.

In late May, 14 inmates died in prisons in the northeastern state of Ceara, which led the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to issue a statement expressing their concern over prison violence and urged structural reforms. In a separate incident in September, some 200 inmates rioted and escaped from the overpopulated Jardimopolis prison in Sao Paulo state. —AFP

## JUSTIN TRUDEAU, SOPHIE AND THE KIDS: CANADA'S POLITICAL FAMILY

**MONTREAL:** Justin Trudeau hasn't been alone as his star rises in the political world—whether visiting China's Great Wall, dining at the White House or marching in Toronto's gay pride parade, he's often joined by his family who have helped cement his reputation as a down-to-earth everyman. Upon taking office one year ago, the prime minister set the tone: Although he's Canada's leader, he's also a father with a young family. Wife Sophie, nine-year-old Xavier, seven-year-old Ella-Grace and two-year-old Hadrien have done their part to bolster dad's political career.

The children seemed unaffected by the glare of the media at Trudeau's swearing-in, while trick-or-treating on Halloween, or during foreign trips on government business. "Justin explored the world when he was young," when his father Pierre Trudeau was prime minister and similarly grew up in the limelight, said Alex Marland, a politics professor at Memorial University in Newfoundland. His carefree "flower child" mother and siblings were also used to bolster the prime minister's image, Marland said, shown at the elder Trudeau's side when he greeted Queen Elizabeth II or Fidel Castro.

"Justin Trudeau grew up with the media, and his wife (a former television host) has obviously a lot of experience with the media too," Marland said. Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau has a natural elegance and has helped promote Canadian fashions by wearing pieces by local designers. Days after the Liberals' election win, the couple were featured on the cover of Vogue magazine gazing deeply and affectionately into each other's eyes. "It's celebrity politics," said Myriam Durocher, a communications researcher at the University of Montreal. The couple and their three children evoke traditional family values, she said.

### Please don't call me Madame

PG Forest, director of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, says Trudeau has what he calls "the Hollywood factor." "Part of his personal appeal and very high approval rating is his ability to relate to anybody," he added. "It's fascinating." In the spring, the Trudeaus traveled to Washington for a state dinner hosted by US President Barack Obama, which drew not only senior government officials but also stars from Hollywood and American music. Aged 44 and 41, Justin and Sophie embody a new generation in Canadian politics. At a Gay Pride event in Vancouver this summer, Justin pushed Hadrien in a stroller while Xavier and Ella-Grace marched alongside their mother seemingly unfazed by the gaze of the huge crowd around them. "Publicity and politics go hand in hand, and in order to have a public profile you must promote a public image," Durocher said. Trudeau, she says, has nurtured his image as modern leader. She also points out that Trudeau taps into deep emotions with the public, for example, when he stepped down from the plane that brought him to Washington with Hadrien in his arms, or when he and his wife dressed as Star Wars characters to take their children trick-or-treating on Halloween.

Trudeau uses social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram (or WeChat and Weibo during a visit to China) to reach younger generations. He poses willingly with strangers for selfies. His wife is now catching up, having launched Facebook and Instagram accounts only a few days ago. "Today is a first! For the past decade or so, I've resisted getting on social media in every way... It's time," she wrote in her inaugural post. Her Facebook cover photo is a goofy family photo, and she signed her first post "Sophie (please don't call me Madame)." — AFP

# NORTH CAROLINA'S GOP LOCAL OFFICE SET ABLAZE

## AN ACT OF 'POLITICAL TERRORISM'

**HILLSBOROUGH:** Authorities are investigating after a local Republican Party office in North Carolina was set on fire in what a state GOP official called an act of "political terrorism." A bottle filled with flammable liquid was thrown through the window of the Orange County Republican Party headquarters overnight, according to a Sunday news release from the town of Hillsborough. The flammable substance that was thrown into the office ignited and damaged the interior before burning out. No one was injured.

In addition to the fire, the news release said an adjacent building was spray-painted with the words: "Nazi Republicans leave town or else." Another business owner discovered the damage Sunday morning. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was working with local investigators. State GOP executive director Dallas Woodhouse said people sometimes work after-hours and he felt lucky no one was there at the time. He said the bottle appeared to have landed on or near the couch where volunteers sometimes take naps. "They are working around the clock. It is a miracle that nobody was killed," he said in an interview, calling the fire an act of "political terrorism."

He said Republican offices around the state were re-examining their security. On Sunday afternoon, the walls of the multi-room office were covered in black char, and a couch against one wall had been burned down to its springs. Shattered glass covered the floor, and melted campaign yard signs showed warped lettering. The graffiti had been covered in paint. The violent act in the key battleground state was condemned by public figures across the political spectrum. Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nomi-



**HILLSBOROUGH:** A burned couch is shown next to warped campaign signs at the Orange County Republican Headquarters in Hillsborough, NC. — AP

nee for president, said on Twitter that the attack "is horrific and unacceptable. Very grateful that everyone is safe."

Republican nominee Donald Trump blamed the act on Democrats in a Tweet and he also encouraged local Republicans, saying: "With you all the way, will never forget. Now we have to win. Proud of you all!"

At a news conference, Woodhouse urged Republicans to respond peacefully by turning out to vote in November. He said he'd received messages of support from Democrats.

Orange County GOP chairman Daniel Ashley told reporters no one had previously made violent threats against the office several miles from

the town's historic square. Tom Stevens, mayor of the town about 40 miles northwest of Raleigh, said it was fortunate the fire didn't burn the office and other adjacent buildings that are decades old to the ground. Stevens, a Democrat, said the act doesn't represent the character of Orange County, which also includes much of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina campus. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by a 3-1 margin in the county that picked President Barack Obama by a lopsided margin in the 2012 election. "I'd like to believe we aspire to respect hearing differing views," Stevens said in an interview. "This is very troubling." —AP



**PODGORICA:** Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic and leader of ruling Democratic Party of Socialists speaks to his supporters after parliamentary elections in Podgorica yesterday. — AFP

## MONTENEGRO RULING PARTY AHEAD IN TENSE ELECTIONS

**PODGORICA:** Montenegro's veteran premier Milo Djukanovic appeared likely to extend his long term in office yesterday after coming first in elections marred by the arrest of 20 Serbs accused of planning attacks. With virtually all votes counted, Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) had won more than 40 percent—more than double than that of the main opposition Democratic Front. However, he fell short of an overall majority, meaning he will have to begin long coalition negotiations, sparking fears of political instability in the country of 620,000 people.

Two other parties, Klijuc (Key) and the Democrats of Montenegro, won ten percent each, according to the results of Sunday's vote, which was seen as a choice between closer ties with the West or with long-time ally Russia. Tensions were already running high over Djukanovic's plans to forge closer ties with the EU and NATO and were further inflamed after the dramatic arrest of the 20 Serbs. Authorities said the Serbs—with retired police chief Bratislav Dikic allegedly at the helm—plotted to seize the prime minister and parliament and proclaim victory for the opposition. "We suspect that this criminal group was aiming to arrest the prime minister of

Montenegro," the prosecutor's office said. "The plan was to attack citizens gathered outside parliament, as well as police, during the announcement of the results, and then take control of parliament and proclaim victory for the opposition," it said. The pro-Russian opposition branded the arrests as propaganda, while Serbian Prime Minister Aleksander Vucic said he "personally did not believe" in the plot. "I would like to see and hear serious information that he (Dikic) was planning terrorist acts," Vucic said, according to the Tanjug news agency. Vucic had previously questioned the timing of the alleged plot. "I find it curious that this is happening today, and that's all I'll say... As for the rest, it would be better for me to bite my tongue."

### PM under pressure

Djukanovic, 54, is the only Balkan leader to have held onto power since the collapse of Yugoslavia began in the early 1990s, serving several times as prime minister and once as president in the country. But analysts say he is now under pressure, with critics accusing his government of cronyism, corruption and links to organized crime. His win without a majority will likely usher in a lengthy period of negotiation and a "period of instabili-

ty," said political analyst Srdjan Vukadinovic. The results should hand Djukanovic 36 seats in the 81-seat parliament, meaning he will have to court parties representing Croatian, Bosnian and Albanian minorities. Turnout was around 72 percent and international observers were set to reveal their findings about the running of the election later. Barricades have been erected near parliament, apparently to protect the building against any post-election violence. Opposition leader Mandic urged his supporters to stay calm and Interior Minister Goran Danilovic, who belongs to an opposition party, urged voters not to head into the streets to celebrate.

### 'Russian colony?'

One of the six founding republics of the former Yugoslavia, Montenegro joined a loose union with Serbia after the Yugoslav breakup. This ended in 2006, when the country narrowly voted in favor of independence, and relations with Serbia have been fraught ever since. Montenegro was invited to join NATO in December, and ratification of the deal will be put to the next parliament. But the issue profoundly divides the country, prompting reminders of the bonds with Russia and the alliance's 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia. — AFP

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