

# *Latest Prison Riot Kills More than 30 in Brazil*

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Brasilia, January 16 (RHC)-- The latest prison riot in northern Brazil is thought to have claimed the lives of more than 30 people, police sources say. Police investigator, Otacillo de Medeiros, gave the latest death toll on Sunday, after leaving Alcacuz Penitentiary Center near the northeastern city of Natal in Rio Grande do Norte state.

"There are probably more than 30 dead" after the overnight massacre at the riot-hit jail, the police official said.

Earlier reports had said gang fights had left at least 10 people dead. On Sunday, police managed to quell the deadly riot. The Alcacuz prison facility holds 1,083 inmates, almost two times more than its capacity of 620.

A string of violent incidents started in Brazilian prisons on January 1, when 56 inmates were killed in gang fights in the northern state of Amazonas. Many of those killed were beheaded and dismembered.

On January 6, 33 prisoners were gruesomely killed by prison gangs in the neighboring state of Roraima. The hearts and intestines of many of the victims were removed.

Experts say Brazil's most powerful criminal gang, the so-called First Command, also known by the

Portuguese acronym PCC, is exploiting overcrowded and squalid conditions in the prisons to expand its reach across the national prison system.

The gang runs drug-trafficking operations both inside and outside prisons even though many of its leaders are in maximum-security facilities in Sao Paulo state.

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