

Brazilian president ends investigation teams identifying remains of dictatorship victims



Brasilia, April 24 (RHC)-- Brazil's government has ordered the closure of two working groups responsible for finding and identifying the bodies of people forcibly disappeared during the country's military dictatorship.

By order of Decree 9,759, President Jair Bolsonaro's administration shut down the work of Perus Working Group (PWG), responsible for identifying over a thousand bones found in a mass, clandestine grave in Perus, west of São Paulo. The remains had been buried during the military dictatorship (1964-1985).

The Araguaia Working Group (AWG), responsible for the search and identification of remains of Araguaia guerrilla fighters who battled the dictatorship in the Amazon rainforest between the states of Para and Tocantins in the 1970s, has also been closed down.

"More than burying the disappeared, the government is imploding a whole system aimed at justice," Prosecutor Eugenia Gonzaga, who chairs the commission, told O Estado de S. Paulo newspaper Monday.

The decree terminated councils and commissions which allowed civil society participation in federal government. Local newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo confirmed Monday that both groups are affected.

Among more than 600 corpses found at the Perus site, 85 percent were of men and five percent were children. There are over a thousand boxes of human remains still needing to be identified, Pagina12 reported.

The Ministry of Human Rights reported one of the last identified victims was of trade unionist and guerrilla Aluizio Palhano Pedreira Ferreira who disappeared in 1971. Pedreira Ferreira had joined the Revolutionary Popular Vanguard led by the former army captain Carlos Lamarca who had defected from the Brazilian army in 1969.

Recently, President Bolsonaro said shortly after becoming a military cadet in the 70s, he participated in the search of Lamarca in the interior of San Pablo.

Bolsonaro, a former military capitan, has defended the dictatorship which was supported by the United States State Department. On March 31 of this year, he called for an army commemoration of the 55th anniversary of the coup that ousted leftist President João Goulart, claiming the events were meant to remember the era, not celebrate military rule itself.

"(This is) about remembering, checking, seeing what was wrong and what was right, and then using it for the good of Brazil in the future," the president said.

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