

Abandoned Brazilian squatter building goes up in flames and collapses



Brasilia, May 3 (RHC)-- A 22-story building became engulfed in flames and collapsed in Brazil. One person was reportedly killed and at least 49 others are unaccounted for, a fire department spokesperson said.

The Sao Paulo office structure, which belonged to the government, was home to some 400 squatters. The Edificio Wilton Paes de Almeida, was built in 1966 but had been abandoned since 2002, the fire department stated. Estadão newspaper reported that the materials used to modify the office spaces into dormitories was made of wood and that more than 50 families called the abandoned building home.

"The lifts had been taken out and those empty air shafts formed a chimney. There was also a lot of combustible material, such as wood and paper which helped fuel the fire," Capt. Marcos Palumbo of the São Paulo fire brigade explained. Governor Márcio França added that the building was an accident waiting to happen. "That type of building is uninhabitable, staying there is looking for trouble," he said.

The cause of the fire is not known. A second building caught fire, but was evacuated with no injuries reported.

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