

## 12th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

The Catholic Prison Ministry of Brazil was represented by Br. Jose de Jesus Filho, OMI in discussions at the 12th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The Congress was held in Salvador, Brazil from 12-19 April, 2010.

The Congress had delegations from a large number of States, with nearly the entire world represented.

As a result of over 190 hours of discussion, the Congress concluded with a Draft Declaration containing 55 topics related to the following subjects:

1. Children, youth and crime.
2. Provision of technical assistance to facilitate the ratification and implementation of the international instruments related to the prevention and suppression of terrorism.
3. Making the United Nations guidelines on crime prevention work.
4. Criminal justice responses to the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons: links to transnational organized crime.
5. International cooperation to address money-laundering based on existing and relevant United Nations and other instruments.
6. Recent developments in the use of science and technology by offenders and by competent authorities in fighting crime, including the case of cybercrime.
7. Strengthening international cooperation in fighting crime-related problems: practical approaches.
8. Crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families.
9. International criminal justice education for the rule of law.
10. Survey of United Nations and other best practices in the treatment of prisoners in the criminal justice system.
11. Practical approaches to preventing urban crime.
12. Links between drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime: international coordinated response.
13. Strategies and best practices against overcrowding in correctional facilities.

The draft declaration will be finalized in May at the UNODC in Vienna, and presented to the 19th UN Commission on Crime Prevention.

In accordance with the Brazilian Government, the International Prison Ministry promoted an exhibition of paintings by prisoners from all over the world. The National Secretary of Justice Romeu Tuma Jr., along with the President of the International Commission on Prison Pastoral, Christian Kuhn, inaugurated the show with a nice reception.

Prisoners were present also through a theater piece called "Bizzarro" promoted by the National Penitentiary Department.

The Prison Ministry was involved in discussion on many important issues, the most

important of which were:

- Proposed conversion of existing Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners into a Convention; in other words what is today a soft-law will turn into a binding law;
- Proposal of UN Basic Principles for Pastoral Care in Prisons
- Proposal of Thailand for the Treatment of Women Arrested.

The creation of a Convention met resistance from some countries like the United States and Canada, which do not welcome the idea of a new Convention. However, most countries in Latin America are in favor of the idea, because this would be an effort to improve the conditions of incarceration in these countries.

The idea of creating a statement of basic principles for religious assistance in prisons has been well received by Argentina and Brazil, which offered a number of good recommendations for improving the current text.

The Prison Ministry, along with other organizations like IDDD the ITTC, Open Society, Cure International, Quakers, APT, the Bar Association of Japan, and Prison Reform International, promoted a series of events surrounding the prison issue.

We worked on issues such as religious freedom in prisons, monitoring of places of detention to prevent torture, Women and Crime, Foreigners in Prison, Report and Recommendations on the prison situation.

Of course, the joint assemblies and meetings with members of the States, experts, and civil society allowed the construction of parallel agendas and promoted working together, planning ahead and sharing of valuable information.

The Prison Ministry held a Mass on April 18, with the participation of dozens of people.

Finally, two comments to the Brazilian Government: a compliment and a criticism. Praise is in order for the concern of the Brazilian government to include civil society. Many civil organizations participated only because the Government took the initiative to include them, allowing a balanced participation of state and civil society.

On the other hand, the assembly felt the lack of a more overt presence of the Special Secretariat for Human Rights. The Ministry of Justice, which is the body officially representing Brazil on issues of crime, was fully present in Congress. However, it would have been a great lesson for the world if the Brazilian delegation were to have been headed by two ministers: the Special Secretariat for Human Rights and Justice. That would have given a different tone for the Congress.

We live in a time when, in dealing with crime, states are more concerned with security issues and promotion of the war against terrorism and drugs, to the sacrifice of human rights. Brazil lost the opportunity to present a stance in favor of the rights of human dignity.

*Report prepared by: Br. Jose de Jesus Filho, OMI, legal advisor to the Prison Pastoral in Brazil*