

Police accused of Rio massacre

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Key Vocabulary

Fill the gaps using these words from the text:

tough	random	off-duty	vendetta
lethal	massacre	shanty town	dispose of

1. A _____ is a situation in which one group tries to kill or harm another as an act of revenge.
2. If you are _____, you are not officially at work.
3. A _____ is an area where poor people live in badly built houses.
4. If you look _____, you look determined and strong and you do not look afraid.
5. If you _____ something, you get rid of it.
6. A _____ is a situation in which a lot of people are killed.
7. If something is _____ it happens without any particular method, pattern or purpose.
8. _____ means 'very dangerous and able to kill you'.

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible:

1. How old was Marcelo Julio Gomes do Nascimento when he died?
2. How many people were killed in Nova Iguacu?
3. How many people were killed in Queimados?
4. What is the murder rate in Rio?
5. What is the murder rate in Baixada Fluminense?
6. How many police officers were charged with murder?

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Gareth Chetwynd in Rio de Janeiro

Sixteen-year-old Marcelo Julio Gomes do Nascimento secretly admired the police, because he could see that some people in his poor community respected them for their tough image and powerful weapons. Julinho, as he was known to his friends, was chatting outside a shabby bar in the Rio de Janeiro suburb of Queimados, when he came face to face with the reality of this image on a warm evening last week.

An unmarked car came around the corner, and its masked occupants fired a stream of bullets so accurate that they hardly left a mark on the walls of the bar. But this was not a random shooting carried out by petty criminals. Enough information has now emerged to show that the killers were off-duty policemen engaged in a private vendetta with their own bosses.

A short walk away from the bar, 33-year-old Adriana Paz Gomes sits on the steps of her modest home weeping for the loss of her son. "I was watching the evening soap opera when I heard the shots. In my heart I knew immediately what had happened," she recalls. Ms Gomes ran into the street and found four bodies in the road, blood pouring from lethal head wounds. Then someone pointed to a fifth body, the body of her son. "I have such lovely memories of my son, but I can't remove the image of that hole in his head. He seemed to be sleeping and I took him in my arms, but he wouldn't wake up," she says.

Julio's death was the final act of a bloody massacre that left 30 people dead in one night. The shooting began in the town of Nova Iguaçu, where 18 people were killed. Some were just in the street by chance as the killers drove past, while nine of the victims, including three teenagers, were in a bar playing video games. The gunmen then moved on to Queimados where they killed 12 more people.

Local people believed the killers were members of the local military police force and Rio de Janeiro authorities quickly arrested 11 police officers and charged six of them with murder. Off-duty police officers are often members of death squads like these in the poor suburbs to the northwest of Rio de Janeiro, in a region known as the Baixada Fluminense. Here the murder rate is 76 per 100,000, compared with 50 per 100,000 in metropolitan Rio, itself one of the highest rates in the world.

In some communities people accept these death squads as a way of reducing crime or preventing the drug-trafficking gangs taking power in the shanty towns. But last week's massacre was more sinister because most of the victims were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. The killers were apparently protesting against a new commanding officer who has introduced measures to try to stop illegal activities by police officers.

Two days before the shootings, two men, one of them a convicted drug dealer, were dragged from a bar and killed. A head was thrown into the police-station compound in protest against the disciplinary measures. Uniformed officers were caught on film disposing of bodies, and eight were later arrested. Authorities have agreed that last week's massacre was a show of force by police officers who opposed the arrests. "This was a group protecting its interests within a corporation and sending a message to their unpopular boss," said Pedro Strozenburg, a coordinator with Viva Rio, an anti-violence group.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has demanded swift action. "They say they are making arrests, but this is just for show. I know that one day I'll be seeing the man who killed my son driving past me in the street," Ms Gomes said.

The Guardian Weekly 15/04/2005, page 7

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3 Comprehension check

Fill the gaps using these verbs from the text:

admire	chat	emerge	recall
weep	charge	convict	reduce

- _____ is another word for 'cry'.
- If you _____ someone, you have a feeling of respect for them.
- _____ is the opposite of 'increase'.
- _____ is another word for 'remember'.
- If something _____, it becomes known.
- To _____ means to talk to someone in a friendly way.
- If a criminal is _____, he or she is officially accused of a crime.
- If a criminal is _____, he or she is proved guilty of a crime.

4 Vocabulary - verbs

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5 Collocations

Match these adjectives and nouns. Check your answers in the text.

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. poor | a. wound |
| 2. tough | b. weapon |
| 3. random | c. community |
| 4. petty | d. activities |
| 5. private | e. shooting |
| 6. lethal | f. image |
| 7. powerful | g. vendetta |
| 8. illegal | h. criminal |

6 Grammar focus

Look at this example:

Marcelo was chatting when he came face to face with reality.

Make similar sentences using the verbs in brackets:

1. Marcelo's mother _____ a soap opera when she _____ the shots.
[WATCH] [HEAR]
2. The victims _____ in the street when the killers _____ past.
[CHAT] [DRIVE]
3. The teenagers _____ video games when the killers _____ them.
[PLAY] [SHOOT]
4. Two men _____ in a bar when the gang _____ them. [DRINK]
[ATTACK]
5. The policemen _____ of bodies when the camera _____ them.
[DISPOSE] [FILM]

7 Discussion

Would legalising the sale of drugs help this situation or make it worse?

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KEY

1 Key Vocabulary

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1. vendetta | 2. off-duty | 3. shanty town | 4. tough |
| 5. dispose of | 6. massacre | 7. random | 8. lethal |

2 Find the information

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|
| 1. 16 | 2. 18 | 3. 12 |
| 4. 50 per 100,000 | 5. 76 per 100,000 | 6. 6 |

3. Comprehension Check

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. T; | 2. T; | 3. F; |
| 4. T; | 5. F; | 6. F |

4. Vocabulary Verbs

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| 1. weep | 2. admire | 3. reduce | 4. recall |
| 5. emerges | 6. chat | 7. charged | 8. convicted |

5. Collocations

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1. c | 2. f | 3. e | 4. h |
| 5. g | 6. a | 7. b | 8. d |

6. Grammar focus Past continuous and past simple

1. Marcelo's mother was watching a soap opera when she heard the shots.
2. The victims were chatting in the street when the killers drove past
3. The teenagers were playing video games when the killers shot them.
4. Two men were drinking in a bar when the gang attacked them.
5. The policemen were disposing of bodies when the camera filmed them.