

Covid-19 in Brazil: Politics and Society

LORRAN LIMA

The first case of COVID-19 in Brazil was registered on February 24th, 2020. A 61-year-old businessman living in the state of São Paulo was infected after traveling to Italy. On March 16th, the first COVID-19 death, a 62-year-old man, was also registered in the state of São Paulo. The Brazilian Minister of Health updated the data for COVID-19: This Wednesday (25th), Brazil records 2,433 confirmed cases of Coronavirus. So far, there are 57 deaths.

The speed of the spread of the virus in Brazil repeats European standards, according to BBC News Brazil and the World Health Organization (WHO). The growth of those infected is being compared with countries like Germany, France and the United Kingdom (BBC 2020). However, many researchers are concerned when comparing data from Brazil and Italy.

Italy registered its first case of COVID-19 on January 30th, 2020 and Brazil registered its first case on February 24th. In its 23rd day, Italy had 155 confirmed cases and 3 deaths. In comparison, Brazil had 904 confirmed cases and 11 deaths after the same period. On its 49th day, Italy had 41,035 cases. Brazil has not yet reached its 49th day; what can we expect from the projections?



Brazil's Christ the Redeemer statue lights up with the flags of countries hit by COVID-19, Copyright: Florian Plancheur / AFP

BRAZIL: THE IRRESPONSIBLE PRESIDENT

On March 18th, the President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, held a press conference where he declared a state of 'public calamity' and reported on some measures and distributions of resources to combat COVID-19. The president was minimally concerned with the situation in Brazil.

As the governments of the Brazilian states create their new, often severe, decrees, the population begins to create awareness of the seriousness of a pandemic. Examples of this are the states of Amapá (Macapá City/North) and Rio Grande do Norte (Northeast), which suspended all types of activities that resulted in agglomerations, such as cinemas, theatres, shops, schools, universities, churches, restaurants and others. It does not affect health-related activities (hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, vaccinations and others) or public safety. (G1 2020). The objective is to stop the level of contagion, to make the Brazilian population aware that social isolation and hygiene are the best measures for security and combating COVID-19.

However, on March 20th, the president participated in an interview where he took a stand against state governments, however, it is important to state that regional measures become valid given the lack of attention from the federal government itself. Positioning itself also against the closing of shopping malls and churches, demonstrating its attention to the economy and lack of attention to the issue of public health. On March 24th, the president held an official conference in which he positioned himself in favour of the functioning of stores, schools and calling for an end to social isolation, (TVBRASIL 2020).

Brazil is experiencing an intense struggle against COVID-19: universities, institutes and hospitals are doing the best job possible. Mayors and governors are working hard. Brazil's daily struggle is not only against COVID-19, but it is a struggle against the irresponsibility of a president and a mass of inconsequential people who follow his positions and his inaccurate news.

An example of the irresponsibility of the president and his voters was the demonstrations, resulting in mass gatherings and the presence of the president. These meetings even saw posters that ignored the pandemic.



Above : Government protesters ignoring a pandemic. March 15th, 2020., Copyright: twitter breeding

Below : An unfortunate statement that shows how ignorance is being propagated in Brazilian society.



SOCIETY ON ALERT

Part of Brazilian society is inconsequentially underestimating the consequences and the proliferation of the virus, and many people are not using safety measures (hygiene and social isolation) as forms of prevention. Voters of the president are using their fallacies to not take preventive measures against the virus.

Even with the flow of correct information and constant awareness campaigns, we see the constant presence of elderly people, classified in the risk group, on the streets. Those elderly people who follow the policy of social isolation are being helped by family, friends and neighbours, in a chain of solidarity. People who shop for their respective senior citizens or even campaign to create a network of people - outside the risk group - that help these elderly people.

Another movement that can be observed in Brazilian society is the use of the hashtag #fiqueemcasa (#stayathome) and the movement made by health professionals who send messages as “estamos aqui por vocês, fiquem em casa por nós” (we are here for you, stay home for us). These are campaigns released through social media with the aim of making the population aware of staying at home, thus preventing the proliferation of the virus.

In the face of so many restrictive, educational and social mobilisation measures, Brazil struggles to contain the virus transmission rate. State governments are working intensively, with the help of health and public safety professionals to make the Brazilian population aware that together we can win the battle against COVID-19, decrease the transmission rate and consequently the number of deaths.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Lorran has master in social anthropology from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil), a Bachelor of Social Sciences from the Federal University of Amapá (Brazil), as is linked to the Study Group on Popular Cultures of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. Research interests include religion, rituals, health and violence.

E-mail: lorran.lima@hotmail.com

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