

# 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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## Police accused of Rio massacre 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 Iguacu, 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

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is another word for 'cry'.
2. If you \_\_\_\_\_ someone, you have a feeling of respect for them.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the opposite of 'increase'.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is another word for 'remember'.
5. If something \_\_\_\_\_, it becomes known.
6. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to talk to someone in a friendly way.
7. If a criminal is \_\_\_\_\_, he or she is officially accused of a crime.
8. 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:

- Marcelo's mother \_\_\_\_\_ a soap opera when she \_\_\_\_\_ the shots.  
[WATCH] [HEAR]
- The victims \_\_\_\_\_ in the street when the killers \_\_\_\_\_ past.  
[CHAT] [DRIVE]
- The teenagers \_\_\_\_\_ video games when the killers \_\_\_\_\_ them.  
[PLAY] [SHOOT]
- Two men \_\_\_\_\_ in a bar when the gang \_\_\_\_\_ them. [DRINK]  
[ATTACK]
- 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?