



## The Campaign for the Brazilian Referendum Starts Today

*Parliamentarians and NGOs gather together in the city of Campinas to launch the campaign that will urge Brazilians to vote "Yes" on a referendum to ban gun sales to civilians.*

Today, 1 August 2005, marks the official start of the Referendum campaign "Sim" ("Yes" in English) that will implore voters to vote "yes" on the prohibition of gun sales to civilians and "yes" to a more peaceful society. The National Referendum, established by the Disarmament Statute approved in 2003, will take place on the 23 of October of this year. The leaders of the *Parliamentarian Front for Brazil Without Guns* (Frente Parlamentar Brasil Sem Armas) and the NGOs Sou da Paz, Viva Rio and Convive will gather together to launch the campaign in Campinas, a city chosen because its mayor died at gunpoint in 2001.

On October 23 all Brazilians must vote (participation is mandatory) on the question "Should the commerce of guns and ammunition be prohibited in all national territory (except for individuals and entities mentioned in article 6 of the Disarmament Statute)?" This will be the first referendum in Brazil's history and the first referendum in all the world to put the polemic issue of gun sales to a direct vote. According to Denis Mizne the Executive Director of Instituto Sou da Paz, "The referendum brings two of our unalienable civil rights to the forefront: democratic participation and the defense of life."

The "yes" vote seems to currently have the advantage. Several recent public opinion polls show that the majority of the population intends to vote in favor of the ban (polls taken by IBOPE and Data Folha in July show 81% and 80%, respectively, of Brazilians are in favor of the ban).

The rules and regulations over the propaganda from both sides of the campaign will be regulated by the TSE (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral) that will allot equal time for media coverage (TV and radio) to both sides starting 23 September. This time will also be open to civil society organisations as well as politicians on both sides. Until September, paid advertising, public acts and distribution of pamphlets, T-shirts and other campaign materials will be allowed.

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