

# LIVES INTERRUPTED

Adolescent Homicides in Fortaleza and in six municipalities in the state of Ceará

PHOTO: CLAUDIO MARQUES

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
  - Legislative Assembly of the State of Ceará
  - Government of the State of Ceará
- FORTALEZA, 2017

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PHOTO: LUCAS MOREIRA

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PHOTO: LUCAS MOREIRA



PHOTO: DAVI PINHEIRO

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Raul was killed at age 17, when he was escorting his girlfriend home. Police officers stopped the bus they were in, ordered them to get off, and then beat and shot him. Vitória was also 17 years old when her boyfriend shot her in the head as she nursed her baby boy in a hammock. Antônio was lynched at age 12 in a vacant lot near his home and Carlos was sitting on the sidewalk talking to a cousin when he was murdered at the age of 17.

The names are fictitious<sup>1</sup>, but all the stories are real and were interrupted by violence in Ceará. Fortaleza was one of the cities in Brazil's northeast region marked by the highest increase in homicide rates over the last decade. The profile of the victims is well known today: they are young, black, poor adolescents living in the outskirts of cities.

In 2013, adolescent homicides in the capital city skyrocketed to 141.1 homicides per 100,000 adolescents. For the total population, the index was 83.7 homicides per 100,000 population, according to data from the Mortality Information System (SIM) of the Municipal Health Care Secretariat (SMS) of Fortaleza.

Given this scenario and the need to come up with efficient public actions and policies to respond, on an emergency basis, to this increasing violence that affects mainly young people, the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides was set up in 2016. This initiative resulted from a partnership between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Legislative Assembly of Ceará state and the state government, which includes other partners linked to the public sector and to civil society.

The study on adolescent homicides in the capital city (Fortaleza) and in six municipalities of Ceará state (Caucaia, Eusébio, Horizonte and Maracanaú in the metropolitan region and Sobral and Juazeiro do Norte in rural areas of the state), which is being made available in this publication and whose full text can be found on the website of UNICEF and of the Legislative Assembly<sup>2</sup>, is part of the strategy to fight lethal violence against adolescents. Through focus groups and interviews with family members of adolescents murdered in 2015, the study reviews their life paths, giving a face to the statistics and acronyms.

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1 The names have been changed to preserve the identity of the adolescents and their families.

2 The full study is available for download at [www.unicef.org.br](http://www.unicef.org.br) and [www.al.ce.gov.br](http://www.al.ce.gov.br).

Each chapter tells the story of an adolescent victim of homicide. These are emblematic stories that are representative of the profile and family life of these adolescents, of the dynamics of violence in low-income communities, and of how difficult it is to access public policies in those places.

In the final chapters, the publication describes the methodology adopted in the study and its recommendations. Based on the main data collected in the survey and on discussions held with various institutions (UNICEF, Legislative Assembly, state government, Fortaleza city hall and organized civil society), recommendations were drawn up to prevent lives such as those of Raul, Vitória, Antônio and Carlos from being interrupted in this way. The main recommendations and evidence produced by the study include:

✓ **Ensuring protection to families that are victims of violence**

Adolescent homicides impact the families of the victims, especially mothers, who are mostly young women. Many of them develop psychological illnesses, aggravated by situations of intimidation and threats.

✓ **Promoting the urban qualification of territories vulnerable to homicide.**

Almost one-third of the homicides were recorded among residents of 52 communities in Fortaleza, where 13% of the capital's population lives.

✓ **Controlling the use and circulation of firearms and ammunition**

In Horizonte, all the murdered adolescents were killed by a firearm. In the other cities, the percentages exceed 80 percent.

✓ **Reaching out to adolescents actively to include them in the school system**

Except for Sobral, the school dropout rates recorded among murdered adolescents at least six months before their death in all cities exceeded 60 percent.

✓ **Promoting opportunities for learning and inclusion in the formal job market with an income**

In all the cities surveyed, no adolescent was working as a trainee or apprentice, except in Fortaleza, where only 2% of the murdered adolescents had had such an experience.

✓ **Training police officers on child and adolescent rights to make sure that they approach children and adolescents appropriately and promoting external control of police activity**

In Fortaleza and Caucaia, 73% of the murdered adolescents had suffered police violence.

✓ **Ensuring investigation of and prosecution for homicides**

According to the families, nobody had been arrested or detained for the death of the adolescents in Maracanaú, Sobral, Juazeiro do Norte and Eusébio. The highest prosecution rate for such crimes was recorded in Horizonte (22%).

# CHAPTER 1

In the communities surveyed, graffiti such as this one reminds them of the murdered adolescents



# THE STORY OF RAUL AND THE PROFILE OF THE MURDERED ADOLESCENTS

The adolescents murdered in the cities surveyed in the state of Ceará are mostly black or brown, male, 17 years old in average and residents of poor neighborhoods of the cities. Raul, who was killed by police in Fortaleza, fits this profile

Raul was born in a public hospital in Fortaleza and was shortly after given for adoption by his biological mother. His adoptive parents had low education and income: Madalena worked as a kitchen assistant in a hospital and Pedro worked as a prosthetic technician.

When he was 5 years old, his parents broke up and Raul suffered a lot from the situation. His father moved to another municipality with a new partner. The boy and his sister from a previous relationship of Madalena's were mistreated by the stepmother when they visited them on weekends. The woman refused to accept Raul and threatened to remove his father's surname from his birth certificate. Even so, the boy regularly visited his father and two sisters born of the new relationship.

Madalena also began a new relationship and Raul got along well with his stepfather. Despite the conflicting situation with his stepmother, the boy always felt safe with the love of his mother, father, stepfather, sister and godmother.

According to his mother, Raul's childhood was very good. They would walk together, play video games at home, watch cartoons and play in the street, where everybody liked him. His mother escorted him to school and futsal training sessions regularly, held birthday parties for him and gave

special importance to photographs, to record important moments in her son's life, which she described as her "greatest gift in life." He also used to take pictures of him and his mother and save them on his cell phone.

Raul was enrolled in school at the age of seven to attend the then first grade of elementary school according to the Brazilian system (it would be the second grade today). He used to wake up by himself and made sure not to be late for school. While he attended school, he was a good student with good grades, although his mother was called to school a few times by its principal. That was the situation until he was 10 years old, when he caught leprosy.

The mother believes he contracted the disease in the soccer fields in which he played. When the spots first appeared on his body he went to various hospitals until Raul was diagnosed and began treatment, forcing him to leave school. After being cured, he was left with some sequelae: he lost part of his thumb, developed a knee problem and remained with some spots on his body, which became more visible after sunbathing. So, his daily life boiled down to staying at home most of the time and going out only at night to play futsal in the community school.

After being treated, he no longer wanted to attend school because he was discriminated against by his schoolmates for his sequelae. On one occasion, the mothers of some schoolmates asked the school not to allow him to attend it. Despite these difficulties, his mother never gave up putting her son back in school. When Raul turned 17, Madalena enrolled him in the Projovem program, where he would resume his education after turning 18, three months before he was killed.

During a stay with his father, Raul began to make tattoos. This was also when he met his girlfriend, Elisa, 13, who lived with them for a

Because of the prejudice he suffered due to of his illness and the family conflicts he experienced, Raul decided to make some tattoos. They included two tears in his right eye that symbolized, according to family members, his suffering and that of his mother. According to his sister Vanusa, the police officers interpreted the tattoo as representing a clown, which may explain the violence he suffered on the day he was murdered.

According to Raul's mother, on that day he was on a bus escorting his girlfriend to her home, as they had decided to live apart. The



**"My brother was killed for no reason; he never did anything to anyone."**

Vanusa, Raul's sister

period of eight months. After they broke up, Raul went to live with his mother again. He ended up getting back together with Elisa, but Madalena did not allow them to live together in her home because the girl was only 13 years old. So the couple went to live with Raul's mother-in-law for some time. Then they decided to live in their own home near Madalena's place, who supported the couple and visited them almost every day.

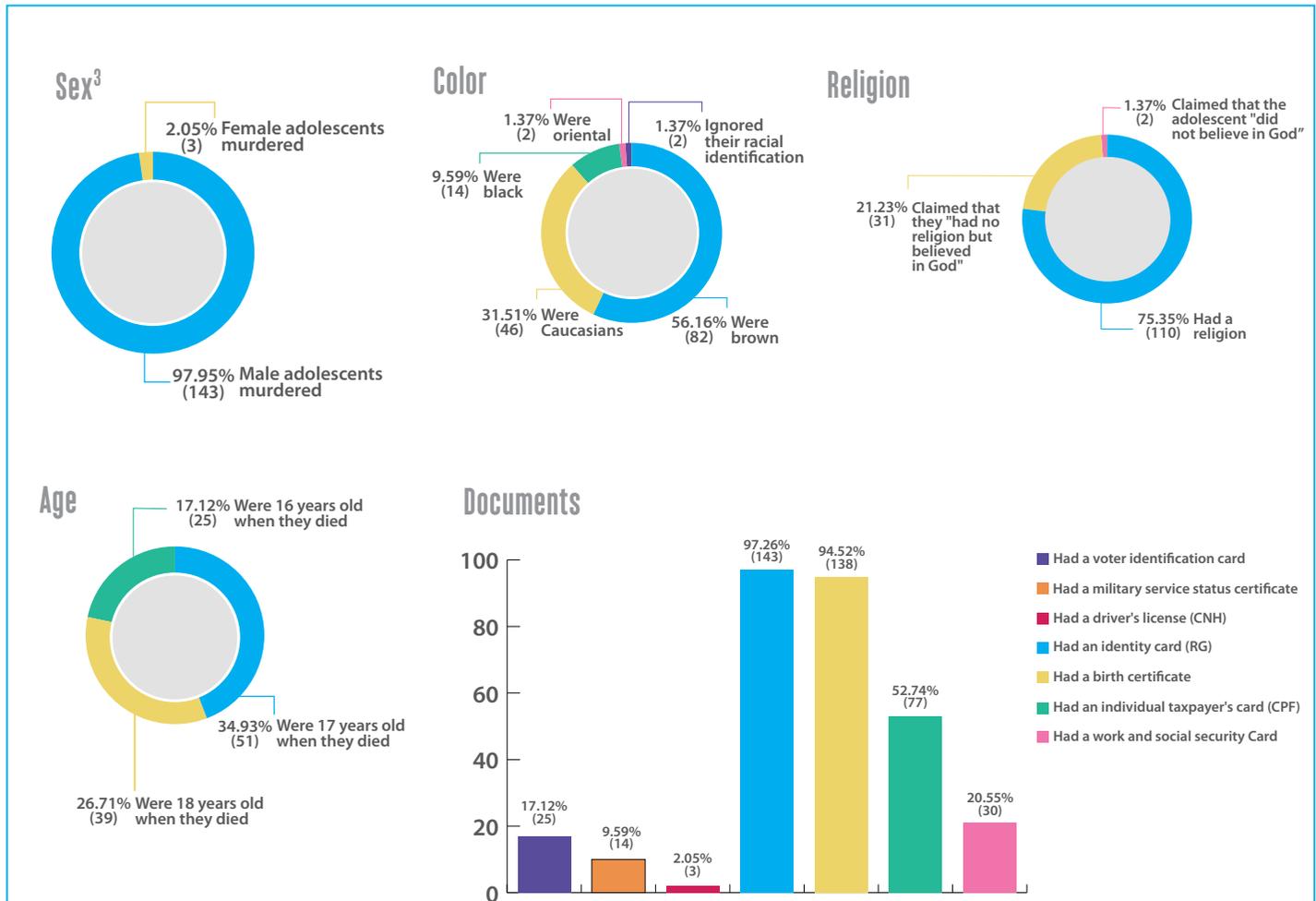
police officers stopped the bus, ordered them to get off and then beat and shot the adolescent in front of Elisa.

Vanusa was asked to recognize her brother's body and said that had been beaten badly on the area of the tattoo: "My brother was killed for no reason; he never did anything to anyone. That's why my mother is so angry. She will not let him go. I keep telling her: 'mother, I also loved my brother very much, but you have to let him go.'"

## WHO THESE ADOLESCENTS ARE

The profile of the adolescents murdered in Fortaleza (see the chart below) and in six other municipalities in Ceará state with higher homicide rates is very similar to that of Raul.

They are mostly black or brown, male, 17 years old in average and residents of poor neighborhoods of the cities. They also have documents, i.e. official records as Brazilian citizens, and a religious belief.



<sup>3</sup> In the other municipalities, three homicides of female adolescents were recorded only in Sobral. In the other ones, only male adolescents were killed.

### AFFECTIVE AND SEXUAL EXPERIENCES

In general, the murdered youths had the typical affective and sexual experiences of young people. Most (78.77%) of the adolescent who were murdered in Fortaleza had no children; only 17.8% had 1-3 children. Among these, 6.85% had children at age 17 and 4.79% at age 16 and 73.29% of them had a girlfriend or a boyfriend. In 47.26% of the

cases, they were not living with their girlfriend or boyfriend, but with family members, and in 45.89% of the cases they frequented their home. Regarding their sexual identity, almost all of the murdered adolescents were heterosexual (97.95%) – only one of them was homosexual and another one was a transvestite.



The murdered adolescents played with friends and family. They also went to the beach and to a square in their city as all the other children or young men did

The tattoos stamped on their bodies expressed their affections in phrases with words of courage and hope for a life different from the one they lived: 52.74% of them had a tattoo of their mother's name and 28.77% of their father's name; 5.48% had a tattoo of an Eastern drawing and 4.11% had one of a religious nature.

The family lives of these young people reveal common situations experienced by them. The murdered adolescents used to play with friends (71.23%) and relatives (60.96% with siblings and 34.93% with cousins). They also went to the

beach (59.59%), to their town's square (43.15%) and to free-of-charge soccer fields (43.84%). They accessed the Internet at lan houses (42.47%), through mobile phones via the mobile network (55.48%) or via Wi-Fi (13.01%) and 18.49% through a computer in their home.

Most of the adolescents murdered in the seven municipalities of Ceará state had also dropped out of school for lack of interest more than one year before they died. They had quit school in the 6th or 7th

grade, when they could be completing high school already. They worked in shops or in construction in temporary jobs. They drank and smoked. They were not assisted by the Guardianship Council, Creas (Specialized Social Assistance Referral Center), a Juvenile Court or the Public Defender's Office. They talked to their mothers about their personal problems. They interacted with their parents. They had electronic and household appliances commonly found in many Brazilian homes.

The murdered youths the typical affective and sexual experiences of young people



PHOTO: FILIPE ABUD

# CHAPTER 2

PAZ  
Justiça  
Liberdade  
Toda...

In graffiti painted on walls in their communities, the adolescents call for peace, justice and freedom

Por  
Liberdade  
12-11-14

PAZ  
Liberdade



# THE STORY OF VITÓRIA AND THE FAMILY LIFE OF THE MURDERED ADOLESCENTS

Contrary to the common sense that victims of violence come from “dysfunctional” families, most of the adolescents murdered in Fortaleza were raised by their biological family and lived with their father and mother, like Vitória

Vitória was born in Fortaleza and spent most of her childhood in a community on the outskirts of the capital bordering on its metropolitan area. Described as “playful,” “good-humored” and with a “contagious laughter,” she was, according to reports of family members, a good student, affectionate with her parents and very attached to her siblings, especially to the younger one, with whom she shared her bed.

At age 10, she began working in a small garment factory with her mother and grandmother. Her dream, however, was to open a salon. She wanted to take a professional course in the area and build a small extension at her home to set up a salon of her own. “But she died before she could do that,” her grandmother regrets in a low voice.

At age 14, Vitória moved to a housing project in another neighborhood. Her parents were given an apartment there along with other neighbors as compensation for the expropriation of the house where they lived for building a road.

One year after they moved, she started dating an older boy who made her pregnant

at the age of 16. According to her family, the adolescent was involved in illegal activities and their relationship didn’t work out. Vitória lived with him for three months and then returned to her parents’ home.

Pregnant, she dropped out of school when she completed elementary school and worked until the day before she went into labor. After her baby was born, she sold fashion underwear and clothing in her community and did hair straightening and moisturizing in her makeshift salon at home.

When the baby was 9 months old, she met another boy and started dating him. Like the father of her son, he was also involved in criminal activities and was very jealous, which the family only found out after the adolescent had died. Her friends told him that he had beaten Vitória and bit her leg once because she was wearing short shorts.

In the last days of her life, the teenager spent her entire time at her mother’s home tending her son and working on the preparations for his first birthday. At night she went to her boyfriend’s place, who lived in the same housing project, and took the baby with her, as she was still breastfeeding him.

On Monday December 14, 2015, a Monday, at around 8 pm, Vitória left her mother's home with her son to go to her boyfriend's place, as she did every day. Her mother was taking care of the family store when she heard a single shot. Accustomed to hearing sounds of violence on the outskirts of Fortaleza, she did not imagine that her daughter had been shot. In another block, neighbors heard the sound of the shot and of a baby crying uncontrollably. Victoria's boyfriend came rushing down the stairs and ran away saying that it had been an accident.

The neighbors entered his place and took the baby into their arms. It had gunpowder stains on its back. A friend of the family told her mother about what had happened. When she arrived at the apartment, her daughter was lying in a hammock still breathing.

Vitória was 17 when she was killed by her boyfriend while nursing her baby to sleep in a hammock. Five months after the murder, the crime had not even been referred to law enforcement for action.

Although her story is different from those of other teenage murders in Ceará, it is directly associated with the context of violence prevailing in the state today. Machismo, authoritarianism, racism, inequality and circulation of firearms are strongly present in Ceará state and in other Brazilian states. Vitória was an adolescent, a woman and a resident of the outskirts of Fortaleza.

### RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Like Vitória, most young people (72.6%) who were murdered in Fortaleza were raised by their biological family and lived with their mother and father. Most of the mothers interviewed in the survey conducted in the capital city also became pregnant in their teen years from adolescents

who were murdered or from a brother of those adolescents (55.4%).

Therefore, many of them became mothers at a very young age, while still in a stage of individual development, and ended up taking upon themselves all the responsibility for raising their children without actually sharing it with their fathers.

Women facing "double" and even "triple" working hours develop themselves and their conceptions about the world and their lives while carrying out the social roles required by their situation as mothers. They are the exclusive providers for their families. Many of them even self-proclaim themselves as responsible for their children and other family members, as well as for the income of the household.

As a result, "maternal guilt" takes on different forms and becomes deeper and deeper, since these mothers usually keep track of their children's school life, health care, conflicts between brothers and the community, buy food and clothes for them, pay the rent, and end up assuming all the affective and financial responsibility for their family. Respondents in the capital said that the mother was responsible for the adolescent in 85.62% of the answers.

Contrary to common sense, which often insists on characterizing these families as "dysfunctional," mothers, fathers and siblings have a relationship which each other in the family and this fact must be recognized and considered in public and social policies designed for families vulnerable to situations and scenarios of violence.

Regarding the education of the mother and father, incomplete primary education prevails (for 48.8% of the mothers and 41.3% of the fathers) in Fortaleza. Few family members completed high school (10% of the mothers and 13.7% of the fathers) and even less of them completed higher education (2.3% of mothers and 1.7% of the fathers).

In general, the education of mothers, fathers and of the murdered children is not very different in the capital of Ceará state. Although the surveyors did not find any illiterate adolescent in the analyzed cases, their schooling level was not higher than that of their parents. Factors such as precarious public education and early entry into the world of work are repeated in a sad coincidence from one generation to the next.

Regarding household income, more than two-thirds of the respondents in Fortaleza earned from one to two minimum wages (67.1%). Only 10.2% of the families indicated that they earned more than two minimum wages and 18.4% declared that they earned less than one minimum wage.

Most of the 224 families that participated in the study in Fortaleza and in six other municipalities in the state of Ceará were beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família Program (68.7%), which stood out in the study as a significant policy of the Brazilian social protection system, especially for women who make and manage most of their household income.

The homes where the homicide victims lived were described as small, cramped and with insufficient rooms for all residents, many of which were used for more than one purpose, like the living room, which was used as a bedroom, and the kitchen, which was used as a living room as well. Almost all the interviewed families had an oven (94.5%), a TV set (92.4%), a bed (91.7%) and a cell phone (87.6%).

Both in Fortaleza and in the other cities analyzed in the survey, they often shared the same space with grandparents, uncles, cousins and others. Four to six people lived in the same home in more than half of the households (54.9%).

## VIOLENCE WITHIN THE FAMILY

Violence against children and adolescents within the family is a phenomenon that takes different forms (physical, psychological and symbolic forms) and should not be seen as natural or attributed to poverty alone, as it affects all social classes.

According to the reports of the family members interviewed, 36.9% of the 146 adolescent who were murdered in Fortaleza had been physically assaulted in their home before with beatings, slaps and punches. Another 36.3% had been punished and 21.3% had been assaulted with objects such as belts, sandals, ropes, cigarettes and wooden sticks. Those who had not suffered violence within the family frequently totaled 31.5% (46 of the total).

In situations of family conflict, virtually one-quarter of the families interviewed (23.2%) reported they did not consider it necessary to resort to any institutional support, 10.2% said that they did not believe in institutional support and 7.5% stated that they did not have information about the institutions they could rely on.

Because they live in communities where public services are scarce, ineffective and often non-existent, the circulation of weapons and drugs is a common phenomenon and interpersonal conflicts are solved through violent and often lethal means, families vulnerable to adolescent homicides need to be heard and cared for.

Factors such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, structural precariousness of homes and low schooling levels of family heads should also be addressed as determinants of situations of vulnerability. These overlapping factors characterize the social exclusion processes that many Brazilian families experience and face as they can.

# CHAPTER 3



In the homes of murdered adolescents, childhood memories are still present



# THE STORY OF ANTÔNIO AND LIFE PATHS OF ADOLESCENT VICTIMS OF HOMICIDE IN PUBLIC POLICIES

Antônio started working at age 6 and only attended school for a very short time. He died at age 12 without being able to recognize all the colors and letters. His story is emblematic of a reality that is not only his. In general, educational, legal or health care institutions have failed to reach out to these adolescents to support them

Dubbed Toinho by his family, Antônio lived with his 73-year-old grandmother, two cousins and three younger siblings in a single-room house not served by a water supply and sewage system. He was killed on an afternoon in January 2015 in a vacant lot near his home. He was 12 years old.

A news story broadcast nationally and his grandmother's account of the murder indicate that he was stoned to death by other youths because he had witnessed a conflict between two important favelas (slums) in the area. According to his grandmother, some adolescents were apprehended but released later. In another version, the adolescent was involved in local drug trafficking and was killed for that reason, which is denied by neighbors, residents, relatives and teachers, who described him as "a working, active boy."

From 6 to 12 years old, when he died, Toinho always had an occupation and brought

some cash home. According to a cousin, at age 8 "he already earned wages and worked in whatever he could to buy things for himself and for us."

Raised by his grandmother since he was a young boy, when he was abandoned by his mother, Antônio only attended school for a very short time. He died without being able to recognize all the colors and letters.

Despite the adult attitudes they saw in him, including in relation to his sexuality, family members assert that Antonio was a boy who "had a childhood." "He used to fly kites, play marbles, play soccer, dance, play make-believe as a salesman and builder. He was reserved and didn't talk to others outside our family, but here, with me and grandma, he used to dance, laugh, play, he was happy," recalls a cousin.

"I want those who murdered my grandson – and everybody else, really – not to forget

my desire for justice, my hope and the pain I carry with me when I lay down to sleep at night," said Heloísa, Antônio's grandmother. "I was sure that [Toinho] would become a great man and [he] ended up like this, killed by hatred and stoning, in the community that I have known since it was established and has become the cemetery that it is for me today."

### SCHOOL DROPOUT

Of all Antônio's brothers and cousins, only one attended school. The others could not attend school due to conflicts in the institution itself or because they had lost their documents and/or had missed enrollment deadlines.



More than 70% of the adolescents murdered in 2015 in the seven cities of Ceará state had been out of school for at least six months, according to a survey of 224 families. This is a scenario of exclusion to which his brothers, cousins and friends are also exposed.

It is a confirmed fact that schooling is an important factor of protection against homicides<sup>4</sup> and that it could contribute to reducing this type of mortality among adolescents. Making sure that these adolescents attend school, however, is one of the main challenges facing us today.

In a focus group with professionals from the state's public education system, the principal of a school in Fortaleza recognized that there are many difficulties to be addressed to keep young people in school, some of which are beyond the capacity of schools to address.

"You have an excellent student in the 3rd grade of high school. She's getting ready for the Enem test and then suddenly quits school.

**"I was sure that [Toinho] would become a great man and [he] ended up like this, killed by hatred and stoning in the community."**

Heloísa, Antônio's grandmother

Why did she give up? You get in touch with her mother and tell her 'let the girl attend school' and she says 'no, if she goes to school they will kill her' (sic)," the principal reported. "It's terrible to be in the middle of this situation without being able to do anything," the principal regretted.

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<sup>4</sup> CERQUEIRA et al (2016). In a technical note, researchers from Ipea indicated that improved school quality indicators have a significant impact on reducing the number of homicides and that the longer a young individual studies, the less likely he or she will become a victim of homicide.

According to the professionals who participated in the focus group, school managers often come across situations, as reported by the principal in Fortaleza, that require help from different sectors and agencies.

Another reason that keeps adolescents out of school is “lack of interest,” as seen in 78 (53.42%) of the 146 cases analyzed in the capital city. Families try to somehow get around such lack of interest, but they are unsuccessful in most cases. One of the mothers interviewed recalled that she enrolled her son in different schools in the neighborhood, but the teenager, who later ended up being killed, always ran away from them.

The need to work or stay at home to take care of younger siblings and the lack of community facilities such as day care centers were also identified as possible factors leading the adolescents to drop out of school.

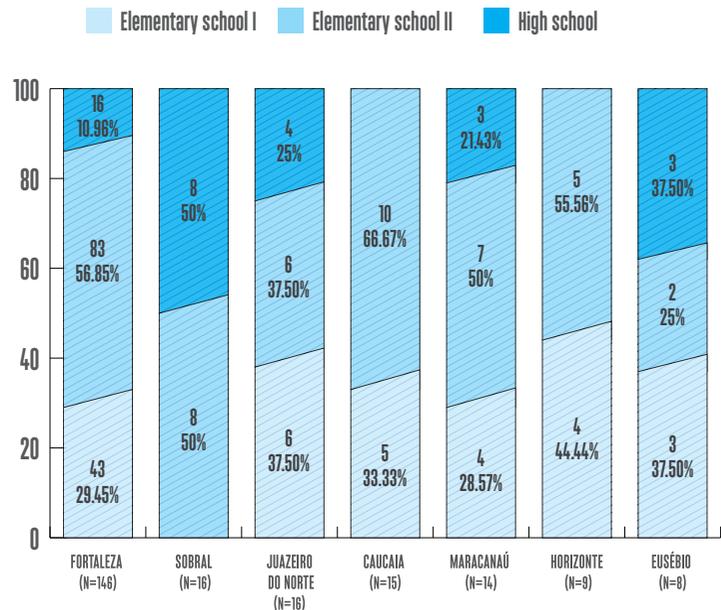
“When a boy is absent from school for five days, you can be sure that the problem is serious. The mother may be using the boy to take care of a younger sibling, which is a common cause of school dropout, or may be forcing the boy to work,” reported another principal of a public school in the state who also participated in the focus group.

In general, however, work was not described by family members interviewed in the survey as a major school dropout factor. In Fortaleza, the city where the percentage of respondents who marked this option was the highest, 8.9% (13 of the total) of the respondents indicated that the murdered adolescents had left school to work.

Regardless of the reason leading to school exclusion, the reality is that the schooling level of the adolescents surveyed by the Committee is

low. According to family members interviewed, most of the victims had not even completed elementary school (*see chart below*).

## Education of the murdered youths



Source: Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides

## LOW RELIANCE ON THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

According to 106 of the 146 families interviewed (72.6%), most adolescents murdered in Fortaleza only sought health care when they were ill.

Behind this low reliance on health care services, there is a worrying context. According to a family doctor who has been working in a health care unit located in a suburb of Fortaleza for three years, health care professionals are not very motivated and are poorly trained to deal with adolescents. “When they see a boy there

[in the Basic Health Care Unit], sometimes the health care professionals would rather have them leave for fear of trouble," he said.

The need for a specific methodology for adolescents was mentioned by respondents as a concern of the psychosocial care system. "In the CAPS AD [Center for Psychosocial Care - Alcohol and Drugs], which is designed for adults, you usually don't see young people seeking help," reported a psychologist engaged in an extension project of the Federal University of Ceará. "First, because we don't have the means to reach out to them. Second, because most of them don't see their drug abuse as an issue," he explained. According to him, no agenda has been set so far contemplating the phenomenon of violence in connection with mental health.

Both the doctor and the psychologist who participated in the survey agreed that strategies must be devised to reach out to adolescents. According to them, the greater the situation of social vulnerability resulting from drug abuse, the more these young people need proactive actions on the part of the health care system in different spaces in their communities. However, both of them recognize that initiatives such as this are hampered by, among other things, the lack of facilities and professionals in sufficient numbers.

Regarding drug abuse among adolescents, the survey did not collect enough information to measure the extent of the phenomenon. It did, however, identify whether or not a murdered adolescent had experimented with a drug of some kind or not. Marijuana (61.6%), alcohol (41.7%) and cigarettes (29.4%)<sup>5</sup> were

the most cited by family members interviewed in Fortaleza. A similar trend was observed in the other cities.

### LACK OF SOCIAL PROJECTS

Although the social context of families and of the places where they lived was conducive to hosting social projects of different kinds, the accounts collected by the Committee also indicated that the adolescents surveyed took little part in such activities. With the exception of Sobral, where almost one-third of the adolescents had participated in a social project, in all the other cities the percentage of negative responses exceeded 50%.

In the study, it became clear that the families of the adolescents were not aware of actions of this kind and did not take part in them, generating a vicious circle: the less they rely on existing services or projects, the less they fit with their profile.

### IRREGULAR AND PRECARIOUS WORK

Like Antônio, who worked between the ages of 6 and 12 - at which he died - in construction, tire repair shops, street markets and in other occupations, most of the adolescents who were murdered in the seven municipalities analyzed had some work experience, most of them in the informal labor market (*see the chart on the next page*).

Only four (three in Fortaleza and one in Caucaia) of the 224 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 whose stories were analyzed in the survey had never worked. Also rare were cases where their professional activities were protected by law, when they worked as trainees or young apprentices. The study

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<sup>5</sup> With regard to experimentation with a drug of some kind, the family members interviewed could mention more than one, as appropriate.

only recorded three situations of this kind in Fortaleza, equivalent to 2% of the answers.

In general, the respondents reported that the adolescents had worked in temporary jobs, such as in jobs involving buying and delivering merchandise, among others. According to their family members, those were extremely low-paid jobs that they took according to their needs on given days. In a context where formal work is hard to come by, especially for young people, informality and illegality can easily intersect.

In the focus group with educators and health care professionals, the lack of qualified employment opportunities for adolescents was recurrently mentioned. "These boys have a huge potential that is being lost for lack of opportunities," regretted the principal of a school in Fortaleza.

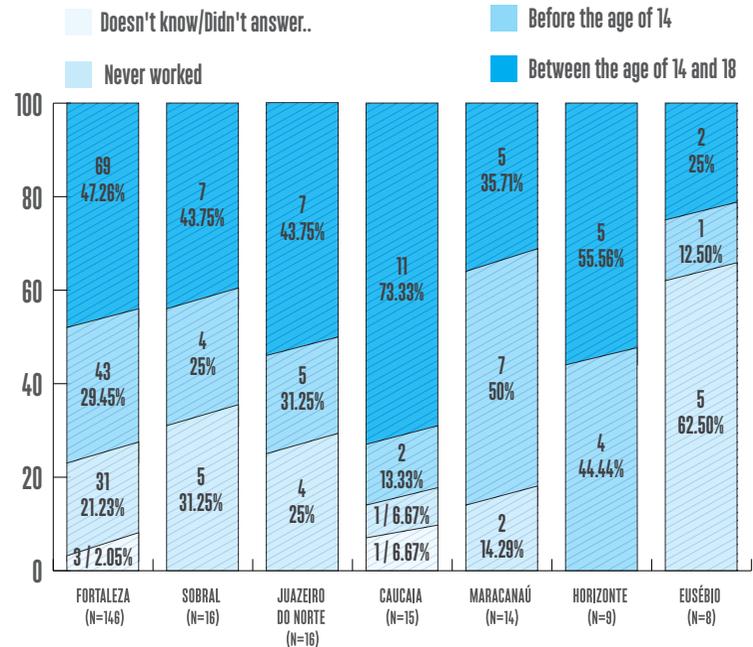
## WEAK SAFETY AND SUPPORT NET

Despite the availability of several projects and programs for adolescents, the reality for many families is that they end up not finding the institutional support they need to overcome the multiple inequalities and vulnerabilities they face.

The accounts collected in the survey indicate that instead of public policies that actually protect and defend these adolescents, the managers and technical staff of those projects and programs often rely more on punitive and rule-setting practices.

According to a member of a guardianship council who took part in the focal group, holding respectful and harmonious conversations with the family of the adolescents should be a common practice in those councils, but this is not what happens in practice. Today, according to him, the social role of the Guardianship Council is confused with that of the police. "The car used

## Age of the first work experience



Source: Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides

by the guardianship council looks like the one used by RADIO [special unit of the military police of Ceará state]. When it arrives, everybody runs away. Everybody wants me to arrest them," he said.

Institutions such as the Guardianship Council and the Social Assistance Referral Center (Cras) were described by the respondents as facilities with an adequate presence in vulnerable territories in the cities and of whose existence families in general are aware of.

However, accessing them is still difficult. The Cras, for example, seems to lack professionals in sufficient numbers, as well as programs that are actually attractive to the community, especially programs designed for adolescents. "I don't see it offering anything that is actually attractive

to them,” a Cras staff member observed during discussions held in the focus group. “We don’t offer activities designed to strengthen family and community ties for adolescents,” she added.

In a scenario in which professionals often see the young people and their families as responsible for their vulnerability or “without great possibilities of overcoming” this situation, few family members admitted that they seek the support from some institution when faced with a situation of conflict. Of the 146 families interviewed in Fortaleza, only 36 (24.6%) resorted to this kind of support. Of these, almost half sought the support from religious institutions (5.5%) or mentioned social work and health care institutions (4.8%).

In relation to the total sample, the most significant percentage of families seeking institutional support was recorded in Eusébio, where four of the eight families surveyed (50%) reported having sought support from

law enforcement, health care and social work institutions. In Caucaia, only one of the 15 families interviewed said that it had sought support from justice institutions. No other institution was mentioned. In Horizonte, no family reported having resorted to institutions when faced with conflict situations.

Saddened by the death of an adolescent member, many families internalize a process of guilt for the tragic event. Also, according to the surveyors, mothers would often tell them: “You were the first ones to show up after my son was killed,” indicating how the state has been failing to assist them in such cases.

In general, legal, education, health care and social work institutions have not been supporting and counseling these families as they should.

In a focus group with professionals from the social assistance system, the director of a socio-educational center in Fortaleza told the life story of a murdered adolescent that summarizes this



Most of the murdered adolescents had not taken part in any social project

recurrent neglect: “When John died, he had killed 14 people. Looking at his story, I see how fragile his relationships were. That boy didn’t belong to his family, to his neighborhood, to his community. He didn’t belong to anybody.”

## SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL MEASURES AND THE CASES SURVEYED

In almost half (46%) of the 146 cases analyzed in Fortaleza, the murdered adolescents had already served socio-educational measures of some kind. In the other cities surveyed, the percentage is just over one-third (35%).

In the capital, the most applied measure was deprivation of liberty (27.3%), followed by assisted liberty (17.1%) and provision of community services (6.8%). In the remaining cities, although the percentages were different, this trend was repeated.

It seems that what hasn’t changed either is the lack of a positive impact of this policy on the lives of the adolescents. According to the accounts collected in the survey, the juvenile detention wards of the socio-educational system seem to have increased the vulnerability faced by these

adolescents before being detained, perpetuating police violence in their communities.

In some cases, the judiciary has been acting in uneven and mistaken ways, as a result of which adolescents are detained months or even years after they commit an illegal act, making it difficult for them to establish any link between their act and the application of the measure.

In addition, monitoring data on the socio-educational system of Ceará state provided by the Forum on the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Fortaleza for 2014 point out that the Specialized Social Assistance Referral Centers (Creas), which provide assisted liberty services, see adolescents serving assisted liberty measures only once a month in most cases. Home visits are also infrequent, as most of such visits are paid only at six-month intervals.

This long interval can have a great impact on the lives of the adolescents, as one of the interviewed mothers told the surveyors: “It all happened very quickly. He experienced it all at once. In only one year, he became involved with bad friends, dropped out of school, got into fights, robbed people, used drugs, was placed under socio-educational measures and was murdered.”

**“That boy didn’t belong to his family, to his neighborhood, to his community. He didn’t belong to anybody.”**

Director of a socio-educational center in Fortaleza



PHOTO: DAVI PINHEIRO

## CHAPTER 4

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Suffering, fear and a deep feeling of injustice mark the accounts of violent deaths of adolescents

# THE STORY OF CARLOS AND THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ADOLESCENTS

Adolescent homicides are usually concentrated in the most vulnerable areas of a few cities. In Fortaleza, 44% of the murders occurred in only 17 of its 119 neighborhoods. Half of the adolescents died at a distance of about 500 meters from where they lived due to conflicts within their own community, as was the case with Carlos

Carlos was a poor black teenager from the outskirts of Fortaleza and he made it a point to describe himself as such. When we asked his parents how he described himself, their response was emphatic and almost unanimous: "He described himself as a black adolescent. He was black."

The accounts and memories of his life were told by several family members: his parents, his sister and his cousins, with whom he had a very close and friendly relationship.

Described as a disciplined and responsible teenager, Carlos lived with his family in a remote street between the José Walter and Planalto Ayrton Senna neighborhoods in Fortaleza. He was the second of three children.

He was very close to his family and enjoyed organizing parties, getting together with his cousins and playing with everyone. He didn't like fighting on the streets or to engage in any act of violence and he didn't drink either. He drank a glass or two of beer for the first time a few months before he was killed. On Sundays, he used to go to the Maraponga lagoon to "enjoy some music," according to his cousins.

During his short life, the teenager only had two girlfriends. The first one lived with his family for some time. "It was a teenage relationship that became serious," her sister reported. His second girlfriend did not frequent his parents' home and her relationship with the family - defined by the respondents as "not particularly conflicting" - may be related to one of the reasons that led to his murder.

Members of his family told the surveyors that she was older than him, had been married before and had a child from another relationship. According to the teenager's father, shortly before he was murdered he received a phone call from the ex-husband of Carlos's girlfriend threatening his son. The man said that Carlos was playing with fire and that he could be killed because of that.

A few months before he died, the teenager also started working with his godfather in an air-conditioning repair shop. He was already earning his own money and said he would help his father renovate their home. He had plans to rent a beach house to take his family and friends there to

celebrate his 18th birthday, as his father had done in his fifteenth birthday. He died one day before his godfather hired him as a formal employee.

At around 9:00 p.m. Carlos was sitting on a sidewalk talking to a cousin, as he did every night, when he was murdered. His parents, Lucimar and Claudio, were watching television in bed when they heard a shot. "I heard the shot that killed my son," his mother said. They got up in alarm, rushed outside and saw Carlos lying dead on the floor.

That hole of the bullet that killed her son that night is still on their door. However, no investigation into the case has been opened. According to Carlos' parents, the local chief of

murder is that Carlos might have been mistaken for another person. He looked a lot like one of his cousins who was involved in cargo robberies and was being threatened with death. Although they want justice, his family members seem to be very afraid of pushing for an investigation into the case.

With a sad look, his father reported that he sometimes imagines his son coming home after work. To perpetuate these memories, the family made a video of the teenager's photos with friends, cousins, uncles and parents in different situations, such as in parties and in judo training, his favorite sport. The music in the background is a gospel song, Carlos' favorite one.



**Half of the homicides of adolescents recorded in Fortaleza in 2015 occurred at an average distance of 500 meters from the home of the victims**

police has shown no interest in investigating his murder.

Their neighbors reported that the shooters were on a motorcycle wearing helmets and had passed in front of their home to watch what was going on there before firing the shots. Carlos tried to rush inside the house, but didn't make it.

Another hypothesis raised by the family for the

## CONFLICTING COMMUNITY LIFE

Carlos' story doesn't fit any stereotype presented by society and the media, which insist on criminalizing and putting all poor black youths who suffer violence in the outskirts of Fortaleza in sort of a "common grave." At the same time, it is characteristic of a significant

number of cases of adolescents killed by firearms in Fortaleza and in the other six municipalities of Ceará state studied by the Committee (Caucaia, Eusébio, Horizonte and Maracanaú, in the metropolitan region, Sobral and Juazeiro do Norte, in rural areas of the state). In this tragic context, several different variables complement and intertwine with each other, repeating a similar pattern in many corners of Brazil.

In this scenario, two points stand out:

- ◆ A context of armed conflict and violence.
- ◆ And a low rate of solution and convictions for murders in vulnerable territories.

**Conflicts with drug dealers and other criminals, revenge, crimes of passion and misunderstandings are among the leading causes of adolescent homicides**

Most of the murdered teenagers died near where they lived. In Caucaia, for example, 87% of adolescents were murdered in the neighborhood where they lived. Given the precarious infrastructure and services prevailing in those neighborhoods, urban segregation is a factor that contributes to vulnerability to lethal violence.

In general, conflicts within the community result in many deaths, as indicated by almost half of the respondents in Horizonte (44.4%) and Sobral (43.7%). According to the survey, these conflicts are associated with four main



PHOTO: FILIPE ABUD

According to the accounts provided by 146 members of the families of adolescents murdered in Fortaleza in 2015, 59 adolescents (40.41%) were experiencing a conflict of some kind in their neighborhood. In the other municipalities surveyed, the situation was not that different, except in Caucaia (20%) and Maracanaú (14%).

factors: conflicts with drug dealers and other criminals, revenge, crimes of passion and misunderstandings. In Fortaleza, these causes of death account together for more than half of the homicides (54.10%).

In such a widespread scenario of violence, where force is seen as a constituent and

determinant element for settling conflicts of a wide range of kinds, professing a faith and having no ties with crime does not make adolescents less subject to violence, as shown by the story of Carlos.

In Fortaleza, the percentage of so-called “deaths by mistake” was 14.38%. In Sobral, they accounted for 43.75% of the causes. In order to eliminate an “enemy,” gangs or other groups end up killing anyone they meet along the way<sup>6</sup>.

In some cases, the conflicts were related to the mobility of adolescents in their own territory. Entering forbidden territory - even if for visiting one’s mother - as was the case with Gilson, 15, was cited as the cause of many of the murders.

According to the survey, 36.98% of the families interviewed in Fortaleza reported that

the adolescents were prevented from entering a certain space, street or territory because of conflicts of different kinds, such as conflicts related to drug trafficking (13.01%), brawls between rival groups (26.71%) or individual conflicts (4.11%).

In the capital city alone, more than 50 percent of the murdered adolescents had been threatened before being killed. Overall, almost half of the victims covered by the survey were aware of the risks involved, meaning that something could have been done to prevent their death.

Gilson, for example, was being threatened by “friends” from the same slum where his mother lived. He was shot twice on the back and four times on the head, and died on the spot. According to his father, the crime was committed



Entering forbidden territory was mentioned as the cause of many of the murders of adolescents in the municipalities surveyed

<sup>6</sup> The scenario of settlement of scores between rival groups has, however, changed as a result of the presence of criminal organizations from other states, which have reshaped territorial bounds in the spaces where they live.

by a group that had killed other people in the region before.

As in Gilson's case, most of the threats were ignored by the adolescents and their families and 32.88% of them resulted in death in Fortaleza. "The boys here are not afraid of bad luck," the grandmother of one of the murdered teenagers said.

Only four of the 146 respondents (2.74% of the total) sought help from the safety net. Unawareness of the availability of such government bodies is still quite high among the population.

**In Ceará state, firearms are the main means used in the executions**

illegal firearm market and its association with homicides are yet to be appropriately analyzed.

The accounts of family members of the adolescents about the dynamics of obtaining and possessing firearms are superficial and do not provide much detail about it. However, a focal group set up by the Committee with law enforcement officials addressed the issue of poor government control over the monitoring of the circulation of firearms and its mechanisms. "The entry of firearms into Brazil



## ARMED VIOLENCE

Firearms play a key role in increasing teenage deaths. In Horizonte, all adolescent victims of homicide in 2015 were killed by a firearm. In Fortaleza, this percentage hit the mark of 95% of the cases analyzed in the survey. According to the 2016 Map of Violence, Fortaleza was the capital city where most people were killed by a firearm in 2014, with a rate of 81.5 deaths per 100,000 population. In Ceará state, firearms are the main means used in the executions. Nevertheless, the

is not being effectively controlled, and that's a fact! In addition, the illegal firearm trade is a widespread phenomenon at various social levels, especially within law enforcement circles," a military police officer who took part in that group said.

According to him, there is an incessant circulation of weapons seized by police that for various reasons end up returning to the hands of criminals, fueling the spiral of lethal violence that victimizes our teenagers.

### UNSOLVED DEATHS

The accounts of violent deaths of adolescents living in the outskirts of the seven municipalities of Ceará state are marked by suffering, fear and a great sense of injustice.

Until December 2016, only 42 of 1,524 cases of adolescent homicides referred to the justice system in Fortaleza in the last five years resulted in a conviction by a district court, 2.8% of the total.

Despite their differences, unpunished or unsolved deaths are a common issue brought up in the respondents' accounts. During the survey, 117 (40%) of the 292 families who had sons or daughters murdered in Fortaleza didn't even have their addresses identified in the law enforcement agencies in charge of investigating these crimes and finding out who committed them.

The vast majority of families also do not press charges for the murders of the adolescents. Many of them are not even aware of this legal tool. Disbelief in the criminal justice system's ability to act and fear of retaliation often lead families not to press charges.

Although evidence about the perpetrators of a good part of the murders is available, only 10% of the families said that they had been arrested or detained for killing an adolescent in Fortaleza. In Maracanaú, Sobral, Juazeiro do Norte and Eusébio, no person was arrested or detained. In the other cities, the scenario of unsolved deaths with no convictions continues to prevail, reinforcing the sense of injustice experienced by the families of the murdered adolescents.

### CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

In Fortaleza, most of the respondents said that the death of their children had been reported in news stories about crime (66.4%). In Juazeiro do Norte, all cases covered by the survey had been disseminated in the press.

However, this coverage, which could contribute to solving cases of violence, ends up reinforcing stereotypes that in many cases portray victims of homicide, especially adolescents and young people living on the outskirts of cities, as the ones actually responsible for their own death.

### VIOLENT INTERACTION WITH POLICE

For the relatives of the murdered teenagers, police also instill more fear than a sense of safety. Only 14.39% of the 146 respondents in Fortaleza said that they feel protected by police in their neighborhoods. More than half of the family members of the murdered adolescents (55.48%) reported that they had suffered police aggression before and 30.82% of the respondents said that police act in intimidating ways.

Humberto, the father of a murdered teenager, said that every time police officers saw his son on a corner they would "beat and club him to the ground." He also told the surveyors that his small daughters "run like hell" when they see a police car.

In Fortaleza, 4.1% of all adolescent deaths were caused by conflicts with public agents (civil or military police officers, municipal guards, socio-educators and prison officers), according to the respondents.

## Massacre in the Grande Messejana region: pain and outrage

With regard to crimes attributed to public agents, during the period covered by the survey

Fortaleza recorded its greatest massacre, that of the Grande Messejana region, in which 11 people were killed (seven of whom were under 18 years old) and five were wounded in a four-hour interval in the early hours of November 12, 2015.

After 44 military police officers were accused of direct participation in the massacre, a court ordered their preventive detention in August 2016 in response to a request for that purpose from the Public Prosecutor's Office of Ceará state, which described the fact as "an act of reprisal, revenge and of police taking justice into their own hand." According to the Public Prosecutor's Office, it was a "planned and intentional" massacre carried out through a "territorial siege"<sup>7</sup>.

Family members of teenagers murdered during the massacre gave testimony to the Committee's surveyors and provided details about their execution.

Cláudio<sup>8</sup>, the father of one of the murdered adolescents, revealed that all the relatives of those adolescents are now living in fear. In order to deal with their pain and outrage, they got together in a group to look for answers to what happened and demand justice. "I'm not afraid of anything, as the worst they can do is what they did to my son," said Claudio, two nephews of whom were also badly injured that morning. In relation to the day of the massacre, he pointed out that "They weren't doing anything illegal. Police arrived there and started shooting them randomly without asking anything."

Tobias, the father of another adolescent killed during the massacre, saw when he arrived at the gate of his home with several marks of aggression. He died right there before he could be taken to a hospital and his father has no doubt as to who killed the teenagers. "I'm sure they were killed by cops (...) they were in about ten cars. They were wearing masks to hide their faces, and thugs here don't do that. They were cops, and I will die saying they were cops," he said.

What happened that night in the streets of Curió and São Miguel is illustrative of a cruel phenomenon, that of the "naturalization of death" by society when poor black adolescents living in the outskirts of cities are murdered.



PHOTO: LUCAS MOREIRA

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.opovo.com.br/app/opovo/cotidiano/2016/09/02/noticiasjornalcotidiano,3655732/chacina-da-messejana-pms-fizeramcercos-para-matar-diz-investigacao.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> All names have been changed to protect the identity of the victims and of their families.

# CHAPTER 5



PHOTO: FILIPE ABUD

More than half of the murdered adolescents had not participated in social projects, such as projects that stimulate the practice of sports in their communities

# 12 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING ADOLESCENT HOMICIDES

All the recommendations were based on evidence collected in the survey and they can help devise a way to avoid the repetition of stories like those of Raul, Vitória, Antônio, Carlos and of so many other adolescents murdered in Ceará and in other states of Brazil

The survey conducted by the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides (CCPHA) raised 12 pieces of evidence that summarize the most illustrative information provided by family members of the murdered adolescents about the circumstances in which they were killed. Based on this evidence, between September and November

2016 the CCPHA held periodic meetings with representatives of several institutions (UNICEF, State Legislative Assembly, academia, state government, Fortaleza city hall and organized civil society) for the purpose of drawing up recommendations designed to prevent adolescent homicides. This work resulted in the recommendations presented below.

## 1 ENSURING PROTECTION TO FAMILIES THAT ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Adolescent homicides impact the families of the victims, especially mothers, who are mostly young women. In Fortaleza, 55% of the adolescents surveyed were children of women who became mothers in their teens. By taking care of other children, they become more vulnerable, as do their children. In the other cities, the survey revealed a similar scenario, except in Juazeiro do Norte.

Many of these mothers have psychological problems, which are aggravated by situations of intimidation and threats that further weaken their family, community and socioeconomic dynamics. Therefore, developing an intersectoral protocol

(health care, social work and safety) for these families is advisable to notify the social protection network about their needs and ensure legal support and psychosocial care to them through programs designed to assist victims of violence and centers specialized in assisting children and adolescents in their territories in a decentralized way.

Activities should also be carried out to empower young women who are heads of families jointly with the Social Assistance Referral Centers (Cras) and community organizations, so as to provide them with education and vocational training to ensure their rights and life projects in an autonomous and dignified way.

## **2 EXPANDING THE NETWORK OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS DESIGNED TO PREVENT HOMICIDES AMONG ADOLESCENTS VULNERABLE TO HOMICIDE**

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Friends and family members of the adolescents are potential victims of violence, so they need to be assisted by the social work network on a priority basis. In Fortaleza, 64% of the adolescents surveyed had friends murdered.

The lack of community infrastructure and of programs and projects designed to prevent and reduce homicides can increase violence in those areas. Therefore, prevention actions focused on the network of friends and family members of the murdered adolescents must be carried out. These include improving the census and the mapping of social risks to contemplate all variables related to adolescent homicides (such as circulation of firearms in the territory, threats, conflicts in the

territory), so that the interdisciplinary teams of the Cras and of the Specialized Social Assistance Referral Center (Creas) can actually meet the social demands of those families.

It is also necessary to allocate a budget to the Councils on the Rights of Children and Adolescents so that, through the State and Municipal Funds for Children and Adolescents, they may invest in initiatives designed to prevent and reduce homicides among adolescents in vulnerable territories in partnership with civil society organizations, in addition to redefining the legal framework for voluntary transfers between state and municipalities based on an integrated plan for preventing adolescent homicides.

## **3 PROMOTING THE URBAN QUALIFICATION OF TERRITORIES VULNERABLE TO HOMICIDE**

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Adolescent homicides do not occur in a homogeneous fashion in the cities. In Fortaleza, 44% of all such homicides occurred in only 17 of 119 neighborhoods. Almost one-third of the homicides occurred among residents of 52 communities (where 13% of the capital's population lives in an area equivalent to 4% of its territory). The infrastructure and services available in those neighborhoods are precarious, turning urban segregation into a factor that contributes to vulnerability to violence. Most of the adolescents surveyed died in their own neighborhood; in Caucaia, this figure hit the mark of 87%.

Urban interventions with community participation, such as land regularization and improvements in living conditions, lighting,

sanitation, infrastructure and social facilities, are essential for preventing homicides. Such interventions can integrate vulnerable areas into the city, considering their spatial and social dimensions.

Therefore, it is necessary to identify precarious settlements, implement master plans and develop a specific intervention policy for those areas with the aim of promoting their integrated urbanization and land regularization for their residents. It is also necessary to establish and/or regulate Special Zones of Social Interest (Zeis) in territories vulnerable to homicides to reduce legal barriers to investments and ensure equity in the distribution of the public budget by regions, giving priority to those with the highest vulnerability indexes.

## 4 REACHING OUT TO ADOLESCENTS ACTIVELY TO INCLUDE THEM IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Dropping out of school is a warning sign of increased vulnerability of adolescents to homicide. Except for Sobral, the school dropout rates recorded among murdered adolescents at least six months before their death in all cities exceeded 60 percent.

Responding to the school dropout problem should be part of the strategy to prevent adolescent homicides. It is important to establish mechanisms to monitor school attendance and conduct an active search for out-of-school children and adolescents through an intersectoral action involving education, health care and social work and a partnership with the Guardianship Councils and Cras. It is also necessary to strengthen the pedagogical guidance provided to teachers

and the educational guidance provided to students to make the schools more interesting and adapted to the learning needs of the adolescents. In addition, programs to make sure more vulnerable adolescents enter the education system or return to it should be implemented in schools located in their territories, with individualized social and psycho-pedagogical support.

Another recommendation is to offer artistic, cultural, sports and recreational activities in schools on weekends and to set up committees for assisting, reporting and preventing domestic violence against children and adolescents in public and private schools in Ceará state, offering continued training in conflict mediation for education professionals.

## 5 PREVENTING EARLY DRUG EXPERIMENTATION AND PROMOTING SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

Experimentation with drugs, whether legal or illegal, has been occurring in the early years of adolescence. In Juazeiro do Norte, 69% of the adolescents surveyed had experimented with a drug of some kind between the ages of 10 and 15.

The drug policy has been leading to armed conflict, incarceration and a high rate of adolescent homicides. Adopting a non-criminalizing approach is essential for preventing early drug abuse. It is therefore necessary to expand and adjust the psychosocial care

network for adolescents, as well as to encourage the financing of community services with methodologies based on harm reduction.

Providing guidance to professionals of the social and educational network in their work with the families of the adolescents in relation to the effects of drug abuse is recommended, as well as expanding the activities of the Health in School Program (PSE) to include mental health care and activities to prevent abusive use of legal and illegal drugs.

**6**

## **PROMOTING MEDIATION OF CONFLICTS AND MEANS FOR PROTECTING ADOLESCENTS THREATENED WITH VIOLENCE AND DEATH**

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The lives of many adolescents are permeated by conflicts in the territories where they live. Such conflicts, which sometimes are banal, lead to violent confrontations, threats and attempted murders. In Caucaia, 60% of the murdered adolescents had been threatened with death.

Identifying personal conflicts and understanding how rival groups are formed and their dynamics are elements of an intervention strategy based on mediation and restorative practices in territories most vulnerable to homicide with the aim of preventing adolescent homicides, with investment in actions in schools and communities. Developing a special program offering artistic, cultural and sports workshops

for adolescents is also recommended, so as to strengthen or create spaces of participation in which these young people may feel that they belong to the community and may develop relationship skills that can help them manage conflicts in non-violent ways and seek support when they feel threatened, apart from favoring the development of life projects without any direct involvement with crime.

It is also important to expand strategies for protecting adolescents threatened with death, as well as to promote the reporting of cases of assault and bodily injury and to reach out for adolescents threatened with death actively with the aim of referring them to the safety net appropriately.

**7**

## **ENSURING INTEGRAL CARE TO ADOLESCENTS SERVING SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL MEASURES**

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The socio-educational system has not been achieving its objective of reorienting the life projects of adolescents in conflict with the law. On the contrary, it has been violating rights, increasing such conflict even more. Substantial differences were found in the cities between the percentages of murdered adolescents who were serving socio-educational measures, which varied from 13% in Eusébio to 73% in Caucaia.

The state government, the judiciary and city halls must cooperate with each other to ensure full compliance with the rules of the National Socio-Educational Assistance System (Sinase), the institution in charge of applying restorative practices and of reducing the rate of imprisonment of adolescents. For this purpose, Integral Assistance Centers (NAI) should be set up and cooperation mechanisms

established by civil society with the Unified Social Assistance System (Suas) to make it possible for the communities to monitor the application of socio-educational measures without deprivation of liberty.

It is also recommended that an integrated information system be developed between city halls and the state government to improve the monitoring of adolescents serving socio-educational measures with and without deprivation of liberty, besides setting up police stations and courts specializing in cases involving children and adolescents in municipalities located in rural areas. It is also necessary to implement municipal plans for assisting these adolescents and to promote the adoption of principles of restorative justice throughout the socio-educational process.

## 8 PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND INCLUSION IN THE FORMAL JOB MARKET WITH AN INCOME

Of the murdered adolescents, 78% had working experience in the formal or informal market, but in most cases their experience had not been acquired as provided for in the Apprentice Law. In all cities surveyed, none of the murdered adolescents had worked as a trainee or apprentice, except in Fortaleza, where only 2% them had this experience.

Avoiding school dropout resulting from early entry into the labor market, protecting

adolescents who enter the labor market by complying with all legal parameters and promoting their right to vocational training in line with their expectations are relevant conditions to avoid exposure to situations of risk. Promoting integration between basic and vocational education from the age of 14, with strict observance of the Apprentice Law and respecting the demands and needs of the adolescents, is therefore recommended.

## 9 TRAINING POLICE OFFICERS ON CHILD AND ADOLESCENT RIGHTS TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY APPROACH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS APPROPRIATELY AND PROMOTING EXTERNAL CONTROL OF POLICE ACTIVITY

Police officers and the communities where the adolescents live have a conflicting relationship marked by intimidation, indifference and, above all, violence against young people. The way police officers approach them reveals how they stigmatize poor black teens. In Fortaleza and Caucaia, 73% of the murdered adolescents had suffered police violence.

Police officers have argued that the aggressiveness in their approach is potentialized by the reaction of the adolescents to their presence, which tends to be stronger. Police should adopt a posture and approach in line with international human rights standards to reduce violence in their interaction with these young people. For this purpose, community

security strategies should be strengthened by promoting links between law enforcement, social work and health care systems, and community organizations in vulnerable territories to reduce and mediate conflicts.

It is also necessary to implement an interministerial ordinance of the Special Secretariat for Human Rights<sup>9</sup> that sets out national guidelines for promoting and defending the human rights of public security professionals, especially those related to health and to education on human rights, in addition to informing and strengthening communities in relation to their rights regarding public security services and how police officers are supposed to approach them.

<sup>9</sup> Ordinance Nº 2 of December 15, 2010.

In addition, police officers must be trained to approach adolescents in non-violent ways as soon as they are hired and mechanisms should be implemented to prevent violent approaches to children and adolescents. In addition, respect should be promoted for

the principle of giving absolute priority to procedures in which the victim of a crime report is a child and/or adolescent by adopting Joint Resolution N° 2<sup>10</sup> of the Higher Police Council and of the National Council of Civil Police Chiefs.

## 10 CONTROLLING THE USE AND CIRCULATION OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

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Firearms play a key role in increasing teenage deaths. In Horizonte, all the murdered adolescents were killed by a firearm. In the other cities, the percentages exceed 80 percent.

The wide circulation of firearms and ammunition and easy access to them contributes to interpersonal conflicts that lead to lethal violence. It is recommended

that a State Firearms and Ammunition Control Plan be drawn up to give transparency to information on firearms sales, on the origin of weapons seized and on the procedure adopted to destroy them. In addition, initiatives should be launched to promote voluntary surrender of weapons to public authorities and ensure control of firearms and ammunition in the custody of the government.

## 11 PROMOTING RESPECT FOR RIGHTS THROUGH THE MEDIA

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When the media makes a show out of the violence, stigmatization and criminalization experienced by poor black adolescents it contributes to a superficial approach to a complex problem such as that of urban violence and to strengthening a punitive culture. In Juazeiro do Norte, 100% of the murders were covered by crime news stories. In other cities, this percentage ranged from 53% (Caucaia) to 87% (Eusebio).

The extensive coverage of acts of violence by the media in a show-like format contributes

to disseminating a culture that promotes fear and non-observance of human rights due to its frequent exposure and criminalization of adolescents and their families, which incite tendentious prejudice against them. It is therefore recommended that advertising of public organizations and state-owned enterprises in radio and TV programs that violate human rights and expose suspects or people accused of crime under state protection be forbidden, in particular by preventing reporters from approaching

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<sup>10</sup> Joint Resolution N° 2 was issued on October 13, 2015.

persons in custody to interview them, unless they consent to it and are accompanied by a lawyer or public defender.

Media outlets should air their crime news programs at appropriate times, as provided for in article 76 of the Statute on Children and Adolescents, promoting new ways of addressing the issue of violence and ensuring

the constitutional rights of those involved. In addition, programs should be developed to monitor human rights violations by the media, initiate civil public investigations to analyze cases of non-compliance with the laws in force and apply legal measures to ensure the accountability of media outlets and reparation for collective moral damages, if any.

## 12 ENSURING INVESTIGATION OF AND PROSECUTION FOR HOMICIDES

According to the families interviewed, no one was arrested or detained for the death of the adolescents covered by the survey in Maracanaú, Sobral, Juazeiro do Norte and Eusébio. Albeit low, the highest percentage of convictions for crimes was recorded in Horizonte: 22%. In a survey conducted by the Committee in Fortaleza, it was seen that this rate is even lower. Of all adolescent homicides recorded in the last five years, there had been convictions in only 2.8% of the cases until the end of 2016.

The sense of injustice stressed by the families is the result of a massive lack of response from the government in terms of protecting and assisting the families of the victims, investigating the crimes and holding their perpetrators accountable. This reality defies the constitutional principle of giving absolute priority to ensuring the rights of children and adolescents. It is important to establish detailed and continuous procedures to investigate, solve and prosecute these crimes.

It is recommended that a protocol and a unified system for recording crimes be established to ensure the accuracy of the information about the victims and their families as standardized by the Ministry of Justice. Priority must also be given to investigating child and adolescent homicides in a qualified manner, as well as to strengthening the technical and scientific capacity of forensic experts to solve homicides and to adopting standards and procedures capable of ensuring the priority monitoring of legal proceedings where children or adolescents are the victims.

It is also important to set up institutional territorial committees to prevent homicides among adolescents in each of the integrated state security areas and to keep the Ceará State Committee for the Prevention of Adolescent Homicides operational with the role of monitoring these recommendations and systematizing information on adolescent homicides produced by the territorial committees to be established by the state government.

# CHAPTER 6

The surveyors paid field visits to collect details about the life and death stories of the adolescents and their effect on their family members

## METHODOLOGY

How the survey that gave voice to family members of the murdered adolescents was carried out to understand how these adolescents lived and in which context

The survey was carried out in seven municipalities in the state of Ceará: Fortaleza, Caucaia, Eusébio, Horizonte and Maracanaú (in the metropolitan region), Sobral and Juazeiro do Norte (in rural areas of the state). The criterion applied to selecting these cities was the absolute number of adolescent homicides based on data provided by the Ceará State Public Security and Social Defense Secretariat (SSPDS) and on its socioeconomic relevance for the state of Ceará.

Understanding the life story of victims of homicide requires an effort to know the context in which the adolescents lived and related to and interacted with friends and family. Therefore, the survey was meant to build stories as told by those with whom the adolescents had ties of affection.

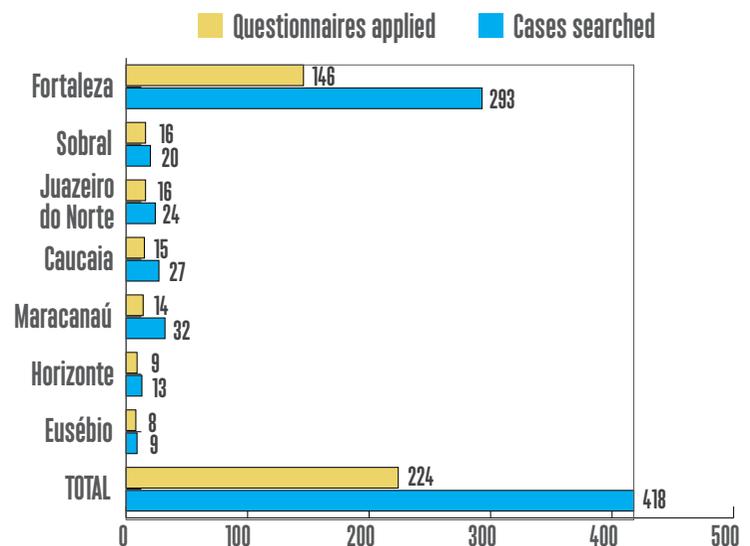
Because the grief experienced by family members and the fear of talking about the subject could have a negative effect on the fieldwork, a questionnaire with 139 closed questions was used to cover the lives of the adolescents in four dimensions: in the individual, family, institutional and community dimensions.

The questionnaire was developed in comprehensive discussions held among the members of the Committee. To validate it, a pretest was applied to 11 families of adolescents murdered in the Bom Jardim neighborhood in Fortaleza. In addition to the questionnaire, field diaries were used by the surveyors to report their daily activities in conducting the survey in relation

to three aspects: the scenarios of observation of the locations, the relations between people in them and the ways of living of the adolescents.

The chart below shows the total number of homicides recorded in each city studied and the number of questionnaires applied. In Fortaleza, Caucaia, Maracanaú, Horizonte, Eusébio, Sobral and Juazeiro do Norte cases recorded in 2015 were surveyed. A total of 224 questionnaires were applied in the seven cities for cases of adolescents murdered in the 12-18 age bracket.

Numbers of homicide cases per municipality and questionnaires applied



Fortaleza recorded 312 cases of adolescent homicides in 2015. Because the number of cases in Fortaleza was much higher than that recorded in the other cities, a sample of 172 cases<sup>11</sup> was randomly selected for the survey there. However, as the survey was carried out it was seen that it was relatively common not to find the addresses recorded in the databases made available to the Committee. Therefore, it was decided that all cases of adolescent homicides recorded in the database would be searched.

Adopting this procedure, 293 addresses of a list of 312 cases were searched in Fortaleza; 20 cases were not found due to insufficient information on the addresses or on the adolescents in question, as even though they had died in Fortaleza they lived in another municipality. In Caucaia, Maracanaú, Horizonte, Eusébio, Juazeiro and Sobral, the cases analyzed were those recorded in 2015. However, no sample was taken because of the small number of cases.

In Fortaleza, 146 questionnaires were applied of a total of 293, i.e. 50% of them. In 40% of the cases, the families of the adolescents had moved to a different address or were not found; and 10% of the families refused to be interviewed. Of a total of 418 cases that were searched in the seven cities, 54% of the questionnaires were applied, 37% of the cases were not found and 9% of the families refused to be interviewed.

It was decided that the questionnaires would be applied in conversations with family members of the murdered adolescents with the aim of understanding their life stories, even considering the bias in their responses caused by the recent loss of a loved one.

Because family arrangements vary, the interlocutors would be those who had the closest relationship with the adolescent and could provide a more accurate account of his or her life from childhood to death. These interlocutors were mainly the mothers (57%), grandmothers (12%), aunts (9%), sisters (9%) and fathers (7%) of the adolescents in question. The other respondents - brothers, cousins, stepfathers, mothers-in-law and uncles - totaled 6%.

The data collection process involved qualitative methods (field observation, diaries, interviews and focus groups) and quantitative methods (questionnaires). A comprehensive strategy was adopted to account for the vastness of interpretations, versions and meanings given to teenage homicide cases by those involved in this scenario.

The team in charge of coordinating the survey also set up four focus groups with professionals working in the areas of Social Work, Health Care, Education, Public Security and Justice in Fortaleza with the aim of analyzing the demand for services in those areas based on the accounts provided by those responsible for implementing the policy.

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<sup>11</sup> This figure was calculated to ensure 95% confidence with a 5-percent margin of error.

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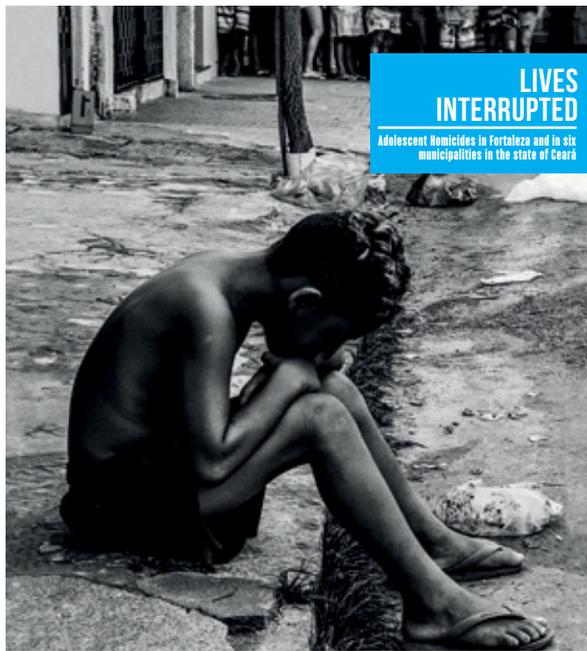
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#### COVER PHOTO

The cover photo portrays the sadness of a teenager when faced with a homicide situation. "Crime is not just death itself. I'm interested in what happens outside the crime scene tape, such as in the banalization of violence by the media in its show-like crime news programs," says Claudio Marques, the author of the cover photo. "Can you imagine what it's like to grow up believing this is 'normal,' that it's something that happens every day?," questions the photographer, who has a degree in Philosophy and works in the Homicide Division of the Civil Police Department. Like the boys he takes pictures of, Claudio also lived with his father on the outskirts of Fortaleza in Aerolândia, in the east zone of the city, and lost most of his childhood friends to violence.

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