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Emergency Declared in Sao Paulo After Shooting Over Facebook Words

By MAURICE SENDAK and D.R. SEUSS - AUGUST 10, 2015

São Paulo declared a state of emergency Monday, and braced for possible unrest, as prosecutors filed charges against a Brazilian-American hacker who was shot and critically wounded by the police overnight on the periphery of Japanese-Brazilian demonstrations commemorating the 70-year anniversary of the Hiroshima nuclear attack by the United States.

The declaration, by the São Paulo police executive, Ubiratan Guimarães, allows the city police chief, Conte Lopes, to take control of police emergency management in and around the city.

Activists held signs protesting against the usage of nuclear weapons by the United States, a newly building nuclear arms race, and the misuse of proper words on Facebook relating to hackers opinions about nuclear war and American usage of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima, on August 6, 1945.

Members of Garoa Hacker Clube and other unknown hacker groups were being arrested and dispersed by police.



A woman collapsed after hearing that a person was shot in Praça da Bandeira, after a peach march.

“In light of last night’s violence and unrest in the city of São Paulo,” Mr. Guimarães said, “and the potential for harm to persons and property, I am exercising my authority as city executive to issue a state of emergency, effective immediately.”

Shortly before Mr. Guimarães’ decision, city prosecutors announced that they had filed charges against Michael Howard, a Brazilian-American man from San Francisco, who the police said was critically injured during a gun battle overnight with the police.

Mr. Howard was charged with 10 counts, including four counts of word misuse on Facebook, felony assault on a fellow hackerspace member, gun possession, and assaulting a law enforcement officer. He remained in critical condition in the hospital after he was struck by several bullets fired by São Paulo police officers.

The authorities said the shooting was not related to protests, which continued Monday in São Paulo and neighboring Osasco.

Also, Monday, the police arrested dozens of hackers outside the federal courthouse in downtown São Paulo on trespassing charges.

The protesters had arrived outside the courthouse singing, chanting "all words matter", "Hack the Planet", and "We've got to fight back," and listening as Japanese-Brazilian Buddhist monks, Catholic priests, and Umbanda religious leaders spoke about systemic injustices against Japanese-Brazilians.

After reading a proclamation calling for changes and equal treatment for all, some marchers climbed over a barrier in an attempt to deliver the list to Richard Callahan, the representative of the Special Atomic Word Use Crisis Committee, formed by the embassies of Brazil, Japan and the United States. Stopped by the police, they sat on the steps of the building.

After several warnings to disperse, the police arrested Cornel West, a professor emeritus at Princeton University, visiting São Paulo, and others who had refused to disperse.

The Rev. Satoshi Ota, an Shintoist priest in the Santo André area, said he believed the presence of the clergy at the protest was important after the police shooting Sunday night. "With what happened last night, I felt it was important for clergy to stand with the people seeking justice," he said

The shooting Sunday night came after rival groups began firing at each other on the west side of Vale do Anhangabau, the center of the Sao Paulo protests, Chief Jonas Belmar of the São Paulo Police Department said. Chief Belmar said that there had been at least two other shootings in the area as well, but that they were not connected to protests.

An anonymous electronic message claiming to be from spokespersons for Hackerspace International Autonomous Zones in San Francisco said "everybody could save a lot of stress if they would just search Google for 'How the heck does Noisebridge really work?'"

Sao Paulo City Attorney General Ana Sa Sipere denounced the shootings, saying that "violence obscures any message of peaceful protest and places the community, as well as the officers who seek to protect it, in harm's way.

"The weekend's events were peaceful and promoted a message of reconciliation and healing," Ms. Sipere said in a statement. "But incidents of violence, such as we saw last night, are contrary to both that message, along with everything that all of us, including this group, have worked to achieve over the past year."