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Brazil votes on gun ban

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23 October, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Brazil votes on gun ban

Should the sale of arms and ammunition be prohibited in Brazil? Brazilians go to the polls today to vote in the world's first ever referendum on whether or not to ban gun sales. Brazil has the second highest rate of gun deaths in the world, after neighboring Venezuela. Nearly 39,000 people are killed from gunshot wounds each year. Mortality rates for gun-related deaths are higher than those for traffic accidents and are the main cause of death among young Brazilians. United Nations research shows that the number of deaths by gunfire in Brazil during the past decade surpassed the number of victims killed in armed conflicts around the world. Latest opinion polls suggest that opponents of a ban, headed by conservative parties and gun manufacturers, are likely to be victorious.

Supporters of the ban highlight the success of recent measures to curb armed violence. After a two-year "buy back" amnesty, Brazil saw its first drop in gun deaths in more than 13 years last month. Around half a million weapons were handed over to police. New legislation also requires gun holders to re-register their weapons every three years. They must also undergo psychological tests and pay a fee that is out of reach for most Brazilians. The "yes" campaigners stress the need to reduce the number of homicides by reducing the number of arms in circulation. Proponents in the "no" camp maintain people have a fundamental right to self-defence and that a ban would have minimal impact on an increasingly burgeoning black market in firearms.

WARM-UPS

1. GUN HISTORY: In pairs / groups, talk about your history with guns. What are your earliest memories? Did you have a toy gun? How often do you see guns today?

2. BAN: Which of the items in the list below are most dangerous to society? With your partner(s), rank them in order of most serious.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| _____ Guns | _____ Alcohol |
| _____ Drugs | _____ AIDS |
| _____ Government corruption | _____ Cars |
| _____ Prostitution | _____ Other (_____) |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Guns / arms / ammunition / Brazilians / referenda / gun sales / gunshot wounds / the past decade / gun makers / homicides / self-defence / black market

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. GUN: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "gun". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. GUN OPINIONS: In pairs / groups, talk about what you think of these opinions on guns:

- All of the world's guns should be destroyed.
- English police officers do not carry guns. This proves they are unnecessary.
- Guns are for criminals and cowboys.
- Owning a gun for self-defence is a basic human right.
- If guns disappeared, people would find different ways of killing each other.
- People have the right to shoot any intruder in their homes.
- People who carry guns on the street should receive lengthy prison sentences.
- Most countries in the world where guns are illegal have peaceful societies.
- Movies and video games are responsible for glamorizing guns and gun crime.

6. GUN SENTENCES: Write five sentences beginning with the word "guns". Talk about them with your partner(s).

- Guns _____.
- Guns _____.
- Guns _____.
- Guns _____.
- Guns _____.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Brazil is voting at the UN for a global ban on gun sales. | T / F |
| b. Venezuela has the highest rate of gun deaths in the world. | T / F |
| c. Guns kill more people in Brazil than traffic accidents. | T / F |
| d. Gunfire in Brazil has proved deadlier than the world's armed conflicts. | T / F |
| e. Brazil's government has just finished a two-year bargain sale in arms. | T / F |
| f. Citizens handed over around half a million guns to police. | T / F |
| g. Brazil's gun owners must undergo psychological testing to keep a gun. | T / F |
| h. Some people say a gun ban would stop the black market in firearms. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. ammunition | overtook |
| b. referendum | intrinsic |
| c. mortality | triumphant |
| d. surpassed | ballot |
| e. victorious | have |
| f. curb | flourishing |
| g. undergo | death |
| h. homicides | control |
| i. fundamental | bullets |
| j. burgeoning | murders |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. arms and | polls today to vote |
| b. Brazilians go to the | reach for most Brazilians |
| c. 39,000 people are killed from | killed in armed conflicts |
| d. Mortality rates for gun-related deaths | are higher than those for traffic accidents |
| e. the number of victims | to curb armed violence |
| f. the success of recent measures | black market in firearms |
| g. legislation also requires gun holders | ammunition |
| h. undergo | gunshot wounds each year |
| i. pay a fee that is out of | psychological tests |
| j. an increasingly burgeoning | to re-register their weapons |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Brazil votes on gun ban

Should the sale of arms and ammunition be _____ in Brazil? Brazilians go to the _____ today to vote in the world's first ever referendum on whether or not to ban gun sales. Brazil has the second highest rate of gun deaths in the world, after _____ Venezuela. Nearly 39,000 people are killed from gunshot _____ each year. Mortality rates for gun-related deaths are higher than those for traffic accidents and are the _____ cause of death among young Brazilians. United Nations research shows that the number of deaths by gunfire in Brazil during the past _____ surpassed the number of victims killed in armed _____ around the world. Latest opinion polls suggest that opponents of a ban, _____ by conservative parties and gun manufacturers, are likely to be victorious.

Supporters of the ban _____ the success of recent measures to curb armed violence. After a two-year "buy back" _____, Brazil saw its first _____ in gun deaths in more than 13 years last month. Around half a million weapons were _____ over to police. New legislation also requires gun holders to re-register their weapons every three years. They must also _____ psychological tests and pay a fee that is out of _____ for most Brazilians. The "yes" campaigners stress the need to reduce the number of homicides by reducing the number of arms in _____. Proponents in the "no" camp maintain people have a fundamental right to self-defence and that a ban would have _____ impact on an increasingly burgeoning black market in firearms.

wounds
conflicts
polls
main
prohibited
headed
neighboring
decade
circulation
handed
amnesty
reach
highlight
minimal
drop
undergo

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Brazil votes on gun ban

Should the sale of arms and _____ be prohibited in Brazil? Brazilians go to the polls today to vote in the world's first ever _____ on whether or not to ban gun sales. Brazil has the second highest rate of gun deaths in the world, after neighboring Venezuela. Nearly 39,000 people are killed from gunshot _____ each year. Mortality rates for gun-related deaths are higher than those for traffic accidents and are the _____ of death among young Brazilians. United Nations research shows that the number of deaths by gunfire in Brazil during the past decade _____ the number of victims killed in armed conflicts around the world. Latest opinion polls suggest that opponents of a ban, _____ by conservative parties and gun manufacturers, are likely to be _____.

Supporters of the ban highlight the success of recent measures to _____ armed violence. After a two-year "buy back" _____, Brazil saw its first drop in gun deaths in more than 13 years last month. Around half a million weapons were _____ to police. New legislation also requires gun holders to re-register their weapons every three years. They must also _____ psychological tests and pay a fee that is _____ for most Brazilians. The "yes" campaigners stress the need to reduce the number of homicides by reducing the number of arms in circulation. _____ in the "no" camp maintain people have a fundamental right to self-defence and that a ban would have _____ impact on an increasingly burgeoning black market in firearms.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'fire' and 'arm'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "GUNS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about guns and their role in our societies.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| • prohibited | • curb |
| • polls | • drop |
| • Venezuela | • undergo |
| • traffic | • homicides |
| • surpassed | • camp |
| • victorious | • burgeoning |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of guns?
- c. Is there a gun problem in your country?
- d. Why is there so much more gun crime in the USA than in Canada?
- e. Do you think police officers should carry guns?
- f. What kinds of controls should be placed on the sale of guns?
- g. Should laws relating to gun crime be stiffened?
- h. Would you vote yes or no in a referendum on guns?
- i. What do you think of the argument from supporters of firearms that "guns don't kill people, people kill people"?
- j. Do you feel the need to own a gun?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think people have a right to own a gun?
- d. Do you think people should shoot burglars?
- e. Why do you think gun crime is so prevalent in Brazil and Venezuela?
- f. Are you worried about gun-related crime?
- g. Do you think it would be easy or difficult to shoot someone with a gun?
- h. What would you like to say to the CEO of the world's largest gun manufacturer?
- i. What do you think of the likelihood that everyone in the world will have a gun one day?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

GUN ROLE PLAY: Should the sale of arms and ammunition be prohibited? Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players.

Role A – GOVERNMENT LEADER

You want to be strong on guns and adopt a zero tolerance policy. Guns kill thousands of innocent people. Guns increase other crimes such as rape and robbery. Guns are illegal in many countries that have very low crime rates. Most gun-related deaths are not carried out by criminals.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY GUNS ARE BAD.

Role B – GUN PROPONENT

You believe gun ownership is a basic human right. Everyone needs a gun for protection, especially in today’s increasingly violent society. Banning guns will not stop criminals from getting them. Banning guns will hurt an important industry and jobs will be lost.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY GUN SALES SHOULD NOT BE BANNED.

Role C – JO PUBLIC

You are a member of the public. You know several people who have been killed by gangs who carry guns. You passionately believe people cannot be trusted to own a gun. Gangs or crazy people will always take away innocent lives. You think a society free of guns is a more peaceful society.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY GUN SALES SHOULD BE BANNED.

Role D – GUN MAKER

You think people need guns for self-defence. You have heard many stories of people saving their own lives because they had a gun. People without a gun in the house cannot wait for the police to arrive. You don’t accept that guns kill people. Criminally minded people are the killers. It is wrong to say guns are to blame. Ask if society should also ban kitchen knives.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY GUN SALES SHOULD NOT BE BANNED.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

Should the sale of guns be banned?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on gun crime in Brazil. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. PROS AND CONS: Make a poster outlining the pros and cons of gun ownership. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Brazil's president. Tell him your thoughts on his country's referendum. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. ammunition | bullets |
| b. referendum | ballot |
| c. mortality | death |
| d. surpassed | overtook |
| e. victorious | triumphant |
| f. curb | control |
| g. undergo | have |
| h. homicides | murders |
| i. fundamental | intrinsic |
| j. burgeoning | flourishing |

PHRASE MATCH:

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| e. the number of victims | killed in armed conflicts |
| f. the success of recent measures | to curb armed violence |
| g. legislation also requires gun holders | to re-register their weapons |
| h. undergo | psychological tests |
| i. pay a fee that is out of | reach for most Brazilians |
| j. an increasingly burgeoning | black market in firearms |

GAP FILL:

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