

## **'Welcome to Hell': Rio protest banner shocks visitors**

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**Rio de Janeiro:** For tourists setting foot in Rio de Janeiro this week, there was a distinct lack of hospitality at the airport arrival hall.

### **Tourists were welcomed by this horrifying scene at the airport**

As visitors arrived in the city's Rio Galeão-Tom Jobim International Airport, they were greeted with a sign that read 'Welcome to hell.'

The full message, written in English for the foreign tourists to understand easily read: "Welcome to Hell. Police and firefighters don't get paid; whoever comes to Rio de Janeiro will not be safe."

The multi-coloured banner was seen being waved by local police and fire-fighters, who were protesting about failed salary payments and lack of equipment.

Protests have been held across the city by disappointed police and fire service staff, who believe the government is prioritising the Olympics rather than the safety of residents and tourists.

They claim that money that is needed for basic public services is being swept into planning for the games.

In a separate gathering outside Rio's State Assembly building, protesters held another sign that read: "The police's priority is the people; the government's priority is the Olympics."

A lack of funding showed missing of important resources at the city's police stations leaving a shortage in everything from toilet paper to petrol for the police cars.

Officers had also received limited salaries, with one heard saying that he had only been paid half his salary the previous month.

He told a news agency: "I haven't been paid my overtime for five months either."

Another officer added: "At the stations we don't have paper or ink for the printers, there's no one to come in to clean and some stations don't have a water supply anymore so the toilets are not functioning."

Rio de Janeiro's acting governor Francisco Dornelles recently said the games may be a "big failure" because the federal government has not paid the equivalent of more than \$800 million (approx. 5400 crore) toward funding infrastructure related to the games. "How are people going to feel protected in a city without security?"

The city is still awaiting 2.9 billion Brazilian real (approx. 5800 crore) in government funds to help finance the games which are due to begin in August.

"I'm optimistic about the games, but I have to show reality. We can have a great Olympics, but if some steps aren't

taken, it can be a big failureâ€•, He added.

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