

## **Ballet and Bullets: Dancing Out of the Favela**

Authors: Frederick Bernas and Rayan Hindi

*Vice*

“Na Ponta dos Pes” (On Tiptoes) is a ballet project in the Alemão favela complex in Rio de Janeiro, created by Tuany Nascimento – a 23-year-old dancer who represented Brazil at international events during a flourishing career that was abruptly cut short by a lack of resources.

Rather than letting her head drop, the setback strengthened Tuany’s determination to help troubled communities through dance. Tuany started teaching classes in the Morro do Adeus favela, where she lives. It’s one of the roughest parts of Alemão, which is currently at the centre of a rolling feud between rival drug cartels and the military police.

Many students in her group of girls, aged 4-15, come from families caught up in narco turf wars, and are afflicted by the chronic crisis of opportunity and urban poverty in the favelas. With an average 20 incidents of weapons fired every day in Rio, last year saw more than 100 police deaths – as well as hundreds more civilians, many of whom are caught in the crossfire of confrontations in their local areas.

Intensifying violence in Alemão heightens Tuany’s motivation to find support for the construction of a community centre, which will give her girls a safe space to dance and study. After the challenges of her own career, Tuany knows her students can’t all become pro ballerinas – but the discipline she teaches will transcend the act of learning to dance, setting them up with a better chance to escape the bitter cycle of hardship which swallows up so many young lives in Brazil.