

Google to correct map highlighting Rio slums

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View from the shantytown complex that includes the Pavao, Pavãozinho and Cantagalo slums in Rio de Janeiro, in January 2011. Internet giant Google has agreed to redo its online map of Rio de Janeiro within a year after being criticized for giving undue prominence to the Brazilian city's notorious favelas.

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"[Google](#) never intended to defame Rio," Google's director of communications in Brazil, Felix Ximenes, told O Globo newspaper, noting that the person who drew up the map was himself a Rio native.

A current visitor to [Google maps](#) finds a favela in almost every area of the city, which is preparing to host the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games.

Google has pledged within six months to a year to update the map so the names of normal neighborhoods and streets are given more prominence rather than the slums.

Roughly one third of Rio's six million population live in slums perched on its steep hillsides, many of which are considered no-go areas due to gangs and criminals.

But, in contrast to the impression given on the map, the favelas occupy just 3.8 percent of the city's total area, said institute for town planning Pereira Matos, quoted by O Globo.

The map could lead people to presume the city was simply "a conglomeration of slums," said O Globo, noting it highlighted even the smallest favelas but missed off important tourist attractions and large residential neighborhoods.

A huge military operation late last year sought to drive drug traffickers out of the slums. Police cracked down again on one of the largest favelas just last week, arresting 11 people and seizing three tonnes of marijuana.

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