

PUERTO MONTT MURDER IS LATEST FEMICIDE CASE IN CHILE

Contributed by Matt Malinowski
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The rape and murder of a 17-year-old woman in Puerto Montt (Region X) and the burn attack against pregnant woman in Punta Arenas (Region XII) represent the latest in a series of violent acts against women in Chile. In response, the government announced plans Wednesday to introduce a law incorporating femicide into the Chilean Penal Code. Juana Maldonado Alvarado's body was found in an irrigation ditch Monday in the southern city of Puerto Montt. Her body showed signs of sexual abuse, and she had apparently been drowned to death. A man, whose name authorities have yet to release, was taken into custody a short time later in connection with the murder.

Meanwhile, María Alvarado (who has no relation to Juana Maldonado Alvarado) is currently being treated in Santiago for severe burns over 40 percent of her body. She arrived in Santiago Wednesday morning after her husband doused her with gasoline and set ablaze in Punta Arenas earlier this week. The brutal attack also required Alvarado to undergo an emergency caesarian section in order to save her unborn child.

With these attacks, the number of victims of femicide this year has risen to 30.

Chile's National Women Service Minister Laura Albornoz reiterated her demands Wednesday that the government take action to put an end to the violence.

"The government should give priority to problems which really deserve it (hellip;) these crimes create national suffering which affects us all," Albornoz said.

Albornoz later announced an initiative which would define femicide in the Chilean Penal Code as a crime distinct from homicide. She also disclosed that she had talked with President Michelle Bachelet's Secretary General - José Antonio Viera-Gallo - about granting the new bill top priority.

This recent spate of violence against women has many people are questioning the willingness and ability of Chilean authorities to deal with such crimes. There has been mounting pressure on the government to respond to the violence, much of which could have arguably been prevented.

Authorities on Monday charged Cristian Tiznado Luna with the bloody July 20th murder of Evelyn Sandoval Bassaure, a mother of two young sons. This case was particularly noteworthy because Tiznado had already been linked to 10 other crimes against women. (ST, July 25)

Under current legislation, it is difficult to convict a sexual aggressor without physical evidence of a woman's struggle. Often, cases get lost in the bureaucracy of police investigations or police work is poorly done.

In related news, the Chilean Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence will organize simultaneous memorial services to remember the victims of femicide in Chile. The events will take place Thursday, July 26 between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. in Arica, Santiago, Valparaiso, Rancagua, Talca, Temuco, Valdivia, and Puerto Montt.

SOURCE: RADIO COOPERATIVA
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