

Funeral held for Salvadoran woman killed in Mexico police custody



Burial of Victoria Salazar at a cemetery during a ceremony in Sonsonate, El Salvador. (Photo: Jose Cabezas / Reuters)

Sonsonate, April 5 (RHC)-- A Salvadoran woman who died at the hands of Mexican police has been buried in the southwest of El Salvador, in the presence of family and close friends. About 50 of Victoria Esperanza Salazar's friends and relatives, many wearing floral arrangements, walked through the La Generosa cemetery in colonial Sonsonate, 40 miles (65 kilometres) west of the capital, San Salvador, to her final resting place on Sunday.

"We want justice! We hope this is resolved because everyone saw how my sister was murdered," Carlos Salazar, the victim's brother, told reporters during the funeral. "The police did not act right," he added.

The 36-year-old victim, who had lived in Mexico for five years, died on March 27 after being subdued by police officers in Tulum, a Caribbean resort. In a video of the incident, Salazar could be heard screaming as a female officer puts a knee to her back while she was handcuffed and barefoot face down on the ground. Three other male police officers were standing by.

The video then cuts to the officers carrying Salazar's limp body still handcuffed onto the back of a police pick-up truck. Her death ignited protests in Tulum and in Mexico City, as well as in San Salvador.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Salazar had been subject to "brutal treatment and murdered" after her detention, while El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele called for those responsible to face justice.

On Saturday, the attorney general's office of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo charged the one female and three male police officers who had detained Salazar with femicide, or the killing of a woman because of her gender.

"The events occurred last Saturday, March 27 ... when the victim was detained by the police officers and, after being subjected to excessive and disproportionate force, likely prompting the death of the foreign woman," the attorney general's office said. All four officers in the Salazar case have been arrested and will remain behind bars for the duration of the trial, it added.

Salazar's body was repatriated from Mexico on Saturday. Her mother and her two daughters, aged 15 and 16, accompanied the body. Salazar had lived in Mexico since at least 2018, when she was granted refugee status for humanitarian reasons and worked in Tulum cleaning hotels.

The Archbishop of San Salvador, Jose Luis Escobar, lamented Salazar's death during a press conference on Sunday and urged the governments of El Salvador, Mexico and the United States to defend and respect "the rights of migrants".

Salazar's death had echoes of the case of George Floyd, an African-American man who died in May as a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck, sparking global protests against police brutality.

"She was a good girl. Nobody deserves to die that way," said Nelly Castro, a family friend, as hymns played and Salazar's coffin was lowered into the ground.

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