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Volver

Canadian lynched in Peru after being accused of shaman's death



Sebastian Woodroffe, 41, was believed to be a patient of indigenous healer Olivia Arévalo, 81

By Dan Collins

April 25, 2018.- A Canadian man was beaten and lynched in the Peruvian Amazon after local people accused him of killing an 81-year-old indigenous healer, a police officer leading the murder investigation told the Guardian.

Olivia Arévalo, a female shaman with the native Shipibo-Konibo people, was shot twice and died on Thursday near her home in the village of Victoria Gracia in Peru's central Amazon region of Ucayali.

Some villagers blamed Arévalo's murder on a Canadian citizen Sebastian Woodroffe, 41, who lived in the region and was believed to be one of her patients.

Police found the Canadian's body buried in a shallow grave about one kilometre (0.6 miles) from Arévalo's home on Saturday.

A cameraphone recording of the lynching was released in the local press and on social media. The video shows a bloodied man crying out as he lies in a puddle in front of a wooden home with a thatched roof.

Two men put a rope or rubber hose around his neck and drag him along the ground until he goes limp and falls silent. A group of people, including children, look on.



General Jorge Lam, the police officer leading the double murder inquiry, said police were following several lines of investigation.

“The body had been fully identified (as that of Sebastian Woodroffe) using fingerprints,” he said.

Ronald Suárez, the highest authority of the 40,000-strong Shipibo-Konibo people, said the men responsible for the lynching had “acted on the spur of the moment and resorted to traditional justice”.

“But we are a peaceful people who have always lived in harmony with nature,” he insisted.

“We have little confidence in the police as, so often, crimes against us go unpunished,” said Suárez, who is president of the [Shipibo Konibo and Xetebo council](#) [1].

Arévalo was a “walking library of our traditional knowledge, the maximum expression of our culture,” he said, describing her death as “very painful”. The Shipibo Konibo people are known for their art and use of psychoactive plant brew Ayahuasca.

Arévalo’s killing follows the [unsolved murders of indigenous activists](#) [2] who repeatedly faced death threats for protecting their ancestral lands.

Police are also examining a theory a possible motive may have been that Arévalo’s son owed money to the Canadian. There are also unconfirmed reports the killer may have been a gang member looking to collect a debt from Arévalo’s son.

Woodroffe is believed to have travelled to Peru from his home in Vancouver Island, Canada, to learn how use traditional medicine to treat drug addictions. He used the [crowdfunding](#) [3] website Indiegogo to raise more than \$2,000 to fund the trip.

Peru’s human rights Ombudsman’s office has called for an investigation, and tweeted its “empathic rejection of the lynching and murder of the alleged perpetrator of the murder of indigenous leader Olivia Arévalo”.

“Canada extends its deepest condolences following the reported assassination of Olivia Arévalo Lomas, an indigenous elder and human rights defender of the Shipobo-Konibo people in Peru’s Ucayali region,” a spokesman for Canada’s foreign affairs department, said.

“We are also aware that a Canadian was killed in a related incident. Consular services are being provided to the family of the Canadian.”

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/23/canadian-lynched-in-peru-after-being-accused-of-killing-shaman> [4]

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