

Sickened by Burning of Family Brazil Town Surrounds Police Station to Lynch Suspects

Contributed by Elma Lia Nascimento
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The Brazilian police have taken two suspects to an undisclosed prison after a crowd tried to invade the Bragança Paulista police station, in the interior of São Paulo state, in an attempt to lynch both men who are being charged with robbing and then killing a couple and their five-year old son, setting their car ablaze.

Joabe Severino Ribeiro and Luís Fernando Pereira are accused of setting fire to the car with Eliane Faria da Silva, her husband Leandro Donizete de Oliveira and their son Vinicius inside.

Luciane Michele Dorta, 27, who worked for Eliane was also in the car, but she managed to break the vehicle's window and despite her severe burns was able to rescue the boy. Taken to the hospital, Vinicius who had 90% of his body burned didn't resist though and died Tuesday, December 12.

The news of the crime and the arrest of the suspects led hundreds of residents from the little town of Bragança, about 50 miles north of São Paulo, to surround the police station. Even after the iron gates protecting the building were closed people continued forcing to get in and they might have broken into the place if it weren't for the prompt action of the military police.

Authorities say that Pereira had worked as an electrician for the bed and bath store Sinhá Moça where Eliane was the manager. Ribeiro, the other suspect, was found slightly burned by the police and also was recognized by Luciana. They told authorities that they decided to burn the car after Eliane recognized them, but they might have planned the fire from the start.

According to the police, the crime happened Sunday night. The two men went to the couple's house and kidnapped them and their child. They then forced them to drive to Luciana's house since she is the cashier for the company and had the safe's key. The man was locked inside the trunk while the kid was put on the back seat.

After stealing all the money that was inside the safe, about US\$ 10,000, the assailants took the car to a desert dirt road, tied everybody, spread some gasoline-like liquid over the vehicle and then set it on fire. They drove away in a red Chevrolet Kadett.

Eliane, who had about 70% of her body burned, told police that she left the boy outside the car and went looking for help until she met a couple that took her to the authorities. When the police came the car was still burning. The woman had her throat cut and her husband was burned inside the trunk. The boy was found walking on the road in a state of shock.

The child died Tuesday morning in the hospital. Luciana remains in intensive care being treated for her burns. She recognized a Ribeiro picture. He had been arrested three times before: twice for robbery and once for robbery attempt. According to the police, he confessed the crime and also incriminated Pereira, who is his brother in law.

Police chief Paulo Afonso Tucci told reporters that Ribeiro had confessed the crime and said that he had used thinner to set fire to the car after the manager showed that she had recognized them. The second suspect, who Tucci believes is the intellectual author of the crime, had been hired recently to do some electrical work at the Sinhá Moça store.