

Ukrainian Woman Whose Rape Caused Protests Dies

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KIEV — An 18-year-old Ukrainian woman who prosecutors say was gang-raped, half-strangled and then set on fire in an attack that sparked street protests in a provincial town, has died, a hospital official said Thursday.

"Lung bleeding began and then her heart activity stopped. We tried three times to revive her with defibrillation," said Emil Fistal, head of the special burn unit where Oksana Makar was taken for treatment.

Hundreds of people took to the streets earlier this month after police released two of Makar's three suspected attackers whose parents had political connections, reigniting a public debate on corruption.

The two men were rearrested and police disciplined after the intervention of President Viktor Yanukovich who sent an investigating team to the town of Mykolayiv in southern Ukraine.

All three young men have been charged with rape and one of them additionally with

attempted murder.

Interior Minister Vitaly Zakharchenko confirmed earlier this month that the parents of at least one of the three suspects were former government officials in the region.

Local media say Makar met two of the three accused in a local bar March 10 and after spending some time there with them, went to the apartment of the third.

The reports say she was then raped and one of the suspected attackers tried to strangle her with a cord. They subsequently wrapped her in a blanket, took her to a pit on a building site and tried to set her on fire.

She was found by a passing motorist and taken to a hospital with serious burns. She had both feet and an arm amputated in surgery, according to the reports.

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