

# Member of the People's Defender's Office dies during demonstration in Santiago

Via [El Mostrador](#)

Both the family of Denisse Cortés and the lawyer for the People's Defender's Office, Rodrigo Román, have confirmed that the victim was a law student at the Academia de Humanismo Cristiano University and a member of the organization, who was carrying out observation work when she was injured in a context of strong police action during the "March for Mapuche resistance and the autonomy of peoples." Although so far the Carabineros have stated that the woman was hit by fireworks from protesters, videos and testimonies on social networks suggest that it may have been a tear gas bomb that caused her unfortunate death. [UPDATED]

This Sunday it was confirmed that the death of Popular Defender's Office member and law student, Denisse Cortés, was confirmed, who was injured during a demonstration that began at Plaza Italia – also known as Plaza de la Dignidad – under the slogan of autonomy and resistance of the Mapuche people, as part of the upcoming celebration of the Day of the Encounter of Two Worlds.

The information was confirmed by the family of Denisse, who had to be taken to [hospital] Posta Central due to the severity of her injuries. The causes, according to the Carabineros, are that the 42-year-old lawyer postulant was hit by fireworks that were aimed at the police. On social media, meanwhile, witnesses who captured the subsequent moments said that the woman had been hit in the neck by a tear gas bomb.

It is worth mentioning that at first it was thought that she was a lawyer from the organization called Defensoría del

Pueblo, until it was clarified that she was third-year law student Denisse Cortés Saavedra (43) of the Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano. The student was also part of the Defensoría Popular, an informal group of lawyers and law students, as well as experts in other fields – social workers, doctors, specialists of different kinds – which since 2005 has been providing legal assistance to people prosecuted for participating in acts of social protest.

From the INDH, the regional head of the RM, Beatriz Contreras, went to the health center to gather information about Denisse Cortés. Meanwhile, the Carabineros reported the incident to the Public Ministry, which opened an investigation under the responsibility of prosecutor Macarena Cañas, of the Metropolitan North Center Prosecutor's Office. The investigation will also be conducted by the Investigative Police (PDI).

Both the family and the attorney for the People's Defense, Rodrigo Román, confirmed that the victim was a law student at the Academia de Humanismo Cristiano University and a member of the organization, who was observing the demonstration.

"It is with deep regret that we announce the death of our third-year law student, Denisse Cortés Saavedra. We accompany her family at this moment in the Central Post, attentive to more information. We highlight her defense of human rights, health brigades and legal defense," said the Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano.

Hospital de Urgencia Asistencia Pública, formerly Posta Central, issued a statement after Denisse's death. The hospital said that "this Sunday at 12:04 a.m., a 43-year-old female patient was admitted to the Emergency Department, where she was attended to by medical staff and later referred to the ward."

"Unfortunately, the patient died during the operation in the

afternoon. Any additional information, in accordance with Law 20,584, and respecting what was requested, will be given directly to her relatives,” the statement added.

“The brutal repression of today’s march by the armed forces ended in the painful death of Denisse Cortés. Responsibilities must be clarified as soon as possible and why the Carabineros did not allow timely attention after she was injured. Anger, sadness and indignation. Justice for Denisse,” PC deputy Camila Vallejo said on Twitter.

Apruebo Dignidad presidential candidate Gabriel Boric expressed “deep sorrow for the death of Denisse Cortés at today’s march. We accompany her family, colleagues and the community of the Academy of Christian Humanism in their grief and demand a thorough investigation of the individual and institutional responsibilities involved.”

The holder of the New Social Compact extended her deepest condolences to the family and loved ones. “We ask the Public Ministry and the PDI to act with the utmost speed in order to ascertain the events and clarify what happened in the events that caused his death.”

The mayor of Recoleta, Daniel Jadue, also expressed himself on the social network and declared that “we must know the truth about the death of Denisse Cortés, human rights defender, in the midst of a harsh repression against a march in solidarity with the Mapuche people. The State of Chile does not guarantee the free right to demonstrate in the country. Outrageous!”

It is worth mentioning that clashes between protesters and Chilean riot police left at least 10 people arrested and 18 injured this Sunday in downtown Santiago while a march in favor of the Mapuche people was taking place.

Called “March for the resistance and autonomy of the Mapuche people” and organized through social networks, the gathering gathered about a thousand people in the emblematic Plaza

Italia, which then moved towards the Alameda, the main artery of the Chilean capital.

Among the demonstrators were representatives of indigenous communities, mainly women, and people of all ages dressed in traditional Mapuche costumes and the Wenüfoye flag as the main symbol of the march, as well as instruments such as cultrún (Mapuche drum) and trutrukas (wind instrument).