

Woman Accused of Being a Witch Tortured, Burned Alive

A woman accused of witchcraft was tied to a stake, shot full of arrows and burned alive in rural Paraguay, a local prosecutor confirmed Wednesday.

The prosecutor, Fany Aguilera, said members of the Mbya Guaraní ethnic group tied the woman, Adolfina Ocampos, 45, to a wooden pole and shot arrows at her before they burned her alive.

Ocampos was sentenced to death last week by the community's chief in Tahehyi, a village about 180 miles north of the capital, Asunción, according to an Associated Press report published in *The New York Times*. The date of the killing was unclear.

Nine men in the village have been charged with first-degree murder.

Aguilera, the local prosecutor who charged nine men, said they have admitted to killing the woman.

The UN Refugee Agency estimates that thousands of people worldwide are accused of being witches every year, London's *Daily Mail* newspaper reported. They are often abused, cast out of their families and communities and sometimes killed.

However Jose Zanardini, an Italian anthropologist and Catholic priest, said the recent case in Paraguay was unusual.

He said, "I've been working in Paraguay for 40 years, and I can't remember a similar episode of an execution for alleged sorcery," he told the *Daily Mail*. "The tragic death of this woman is isolated and out of the ordinary within the coexistence of Paraguay's 20 ethnic indigenous groups. In

general, the Indians are very peaceful and tolerant.”

The state agency for the protection of indigenous peoples said Wednesday that “although the indigenous communities are ruled by customary law, their acts cannot violate the constitutional rights of respecting the life and the liberty of people.”