

Brazil police dismantle illegal abortion ring

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(AP)—Brazilian police in Rio de Janeiro arrested 55 people Tuesday in an operation to dismantle a ring of illegal abortion clinics following the recent deaths of two women who sought to end their pregnancies.

Arrest warrants have been issued for another 20 people suspected of being part of the ring. The suspects include physicians and police officers.

Abortion in Brazil is only allowed if the pregnancy endangers the mother's life or is the result of rape.

There is no precise count on the number of illegal abortions performed in Brazil, but several experts quoted by local media estimate between 800,000 and 1 million are done each year.

Last month, police found the charred body of Jandira Magdalena dos Santos who, according to her ex-husband, had gone to one of the clinics for an [abortion](#).

Police have said she died while undergoing an abortion and that her body was taken to a small farm outside of Rio where it was hidden inside a car.

According to the G1 news portal, the caretaker of the property has told [police](#) he helped torch the car and dos Santos' body, which was identified through genetic testing.

Elizangela Barbosa also died after a botched abortion in a clandestine clinic in the city of Niteroi.

Police said in a statement that the ring performed abortions on women "in different stages of pregnancy including in advanced stages."

The group also performed illegal abortions in other states "in unhygienic places that endangered the health of the women."

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