

Police question New Zealand teen over Amanda Todd images

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USPA News - A teenager in New Zealand is being questioned by police after posting "inappropriate and disturbing images" on a memorial page for a 15-year-old Canadian girl who killed herself after suffering years of bullying at school and on the Internet. Amanda Todd, 15, was found dead just before 6 p.m. local time on October 10 at her home in Port Coquitlam, a city about 25 kilometers (15 miles) east of Vancouver on the mainland of British Columbia.

The suicide shocked Canada and prompted an outpouring of support from across the world when a video surfaced in which the schoolgirl describes being relentlessly bullied and harassed. In the 9-minute video (<http://tinyurl.com/939g5nk>), which was uploaded on September 7 and entitled "My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self harm", the girl flashes more than 70 cards in which she describes suffering from blackmail, bullying and harassment after showing her breasts during a webcam chat when she was just 12 years old. But amid an outpouring of support and calls to establish stricter laws against cyber bullying, the bullying has since intensified with hateful messages and nude photos and videos of Amanda being posted to memorial pages dedicated to the schoolgirl as well as other websites such as Twitter. On Friday, New Zealand police said it had received more than 20 complaints from within New Zealand and across the world in relation to "inappropriate and disturbing images" of Amanda which had been posted to a Facebook memorial page. An investigation found they had been posted by a 17-year-old boy from Raglan, a coastal town on the North Island of New Zealand. "The Online Police Child Exploitation Across New Zealand (OCEANZ) team was quick to deal with these complaints and as a result, Waikato Police staff made contact with the 17 year old male and his family," said Detective Senior Sergeant John Michael, officer in-charge of OCEANZ. Michael said police were able to remove the images and have since shut down his Facebook profile as well as other unspecified preventive steps to minimize further reproduction of the images. "Police are continuing to liaise with this individual and his family, who are assisting us with our investigations," he added. It was not immediately clear whether Michael was referring to nude images of Amanda, which would qualify as child pornography. "Once again this is a tragic case which has highlighted the fact that once an image of yourself or someone else is posted on the internet, all control of it is quickly lost," he added. Earlier this week, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said its investigators wasted hours after images appeared online which claimed to show autopsy photos of Amanda. "This was quickly debunked by the BC Coroner's Service but nevertheless caused extreme stress for Amanda's family and distracted investigators for hours," said Sgt. Peter Thiessen, a spokesman for the Lower Mainland District RCMP Regional Police Service. With several copies of Amanda's video having been viewed more than 21 million times combined as of Friday afternoon, the intense media attention around the world has also led to a number of fake websites and accounts that purport to be fundraising for her family. "Taking advantage of a family's grief is despicable," Thiessen said. Investigators are also working to find out who recorded Amanda, attempted to blackmail her into showing sex acts on webcam, and then sending the footage to her friends, classmates and teachers when she refused. Amanda's mother said a previous police investigation led to the United States, but police were unable to find the person responsible. Internet rumors have since blamed a Canadian man, but police have said those allegations are "unfounded."

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