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Stray Dog Attack in California Leaves Woman Dead, Police Forced to Shoot Aggressive Pit Bull

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A 51-year-old woman was fatally mauled by a pack of stray dogs near a city park in San Bernardino, California, in a harrowing attack that also left another woman injured. The incident occurred Thursday evening near Perris Hill Park and has raised concerns over public safety and the growing issue of stray and uncontrolled animals in areas where homeless encampments have taken root.

The victim, identified as Teodora Mendoza, sustained devastating injuries to her face and body and later died at the hospital, authorities confirmed. Another woman, whose identity has not been released, was also attacked but survived with undisclosed injuries.

Police officers responding to the chaotic scene found the two women lying approximately 30 yards apart. As they attempted to render aid, a pit bull from the pack aggressively charged one of the officers. The officer fired two rounds, killing the dog in order to protect himself and the woman he was assisting.

“At the time that the officer was rendering aid to the female, there were two dogs that ran out of a brush,” San Bernardino Police Department spokesperson Araceli Mata told CBS News. “He then fired two rounds to protect him and the female that he was rendering aid to.”

Sgt. Chris Gray of the San Bernardino Police Department described the scene as “chaotic,” with multiple stray dogs roaming the area.

Video footage from CBS News showed a cordoned-off crime scene with discarded clothing and debris near the park, underscoring the violent nature of the attack.

Mendoza’s son, 21-year-old Alex Lozano, said his mother had been homeless for over a year and often stayed in a nearby encampment within the park. Lozano, who lives in Banning, California, said he learned of the incident after his grandfather in Texas called with the tragic news. He admitted that he hadn’t spoken to his mother in some time.

Residents and local observers have noted that many homeless individuals in the area keep large, unleashed dogs as protection. These animals often roam freely and are not vaccinated or registered, creating potential risks for nearby communities.

Animal control services removed 14 dogs from the park following the incident, according to police.

California has consistently led the nation in dog bite-related insurance claims. In 2023, the state reported 2,104 such claims, the highest of any state, according to the Insurance Information Institute. The average cost per claim in California also topped the national chart at \$78,818, reflecting the severe injuries often associated with such attacks.

The tragic death of Mendoza has reignited debate over the management of stray animals and the unintended consequences of growing homeless populations in urban areas where public spaces are increasingly used as makeshift shelters.