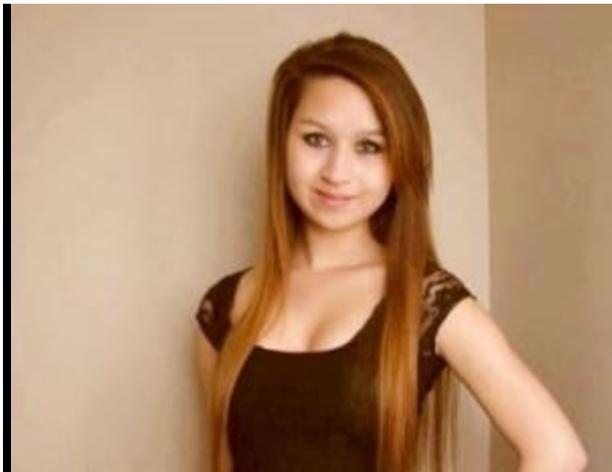


Man accused of extorting B.C. teen Amanda Todd online arrested in Netherlands

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B.C. teen Amanda Todd who killed herself after being bullied over the internet.

A Dutch national has been arrested in connection with the online extortion of B.C. teen Amanda Todd, [Dutch media report](#).

The 35-year-old, who has not yet been identified, was arrested in the community of Oisterwijk in January, according to a story by Dutch media outlets Omroep Brabant and BN De Stem, which linked the arrest to Todd's death.

The Dutch national public prosecutor's office said in a statement that they believe he also victimized dozens of other girls in the Netherlands, Britain and the U.S., and blackmailed grown men who believed they were interacting with an underage boy.

“The suspicions against the man are that he approached underage girls via the Internet and then seduced them into performing sexual acts in front of a webcam,” the office stated. “He is suspected of subsequently pressurizing them to participate in making new material.”

Amanda was only 15 when she took her own life on Oct. 10, 2012. The Port Coquitlam resident had been bullied and harassed online for several years.

The cyber-threats began after she engaged in some webcam nudity with an online stranger who allegedly used the threat of distributing the images to intimidate and harass her, reportedly sharing them with Amanda’s friends through social media.

In B.C., RCMP Sgt. Rob Vermeulen confirmed Thursday that the Mounties had been made aware of the case, which he called “a complex investigation” with “national and international connections.” More details will be released at a press conference scheduled for RCMP headquarters in Surrey at 5 p.m. Members of Amanda’s family are expected to attend.

In an interview with The Province Thursday, the Dutch man’s lawyer, Christian van Dijk, confirmed that his client had been charged with suspected extortion via webcam of a 15-year-old girl from B.C., among other charges.

He added his client faced a total of nine charges, and that he was suspected of having similar interactions with others online.

“It’s not only one girl, it’s a lot of girls,” said van Dijk, of the firm Pieters Advocaten.

The charges include indecent assault, the production and dissemination of child pornography, fraud, computer intrusion, and drug possession.

The lawyer identified the man, who is Dutch-born, as a dual citizen of the Netherlands and Turkey who was unmarried and had no children. He would not say whether his client had a prior criminal record.

The suspect made his first court appearance Wednesday. He was denied bail and is being held in custody in a facility in Utrecht pending his next court date, which has yet to be determined.

Van Dijk told The Province that he believes his client was “very clever but also very decent and a good man. He is not a bad person.”

He confirmed police had seized a computer and router from his client’s bungalow.

However, he said the home would have been easy to break into, and investigators need to prove his client was actually associated with the IP addresses involved and is not himself a victim of hacking.

Van Dijk suggested that his client may have been subject to “spoofing,” where hackers copy an address and uses it as their own.

“You make it your own and download criminal content, that is my opinion what is happening in this case,” van Dijk said.

Amanda posted a [haunting YouTube video online](#) in the month before her death, describing her ordeal and the pain and suffering it had caused, including depression and anxiety. The video went viral and now has been seen by more than 17 million people.

Amanda was a Grade 10 student at CAFE alternative school in Coquitlam when she died. She had attended high school in Maple Ridge, but switched districts, attempting to make a fresh start.

Her mother Carol Ann Todd said Thursday that news of the arrest was “a shock to the system.”

“I sure hope that something concrete comes out of this. But I in no way feel this is just one person responsible for what happened to my daughter. I believe there are many, many out there around the world that would be responsible.”

Amanda’s death sparked global media coverage, inspired multiple vigils and foregrounded the issue of cyber-bullying.

At Amanda's funeral, her mother told mourners that she had found a letter her daughter had written on her computer that spoke to her desire to help others by speaking out.

"I hope that some day I can write a song about bullying," she wrote, "so when kids are alone staring out their windows crying, they can listen to my song and know that it's not your fault and things will get better."

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FOR THE RECORD: *This story has been edited to correctly identify the suspect's hometown. We regret the error.*