

# Venezuelan high court bans victim photos

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CARACAS --

(AP) -- Venezuela's Supreme Court has prohibited two newspapers from publishing graphic photographs of crime victims, prompting praise from government officials struggling to deal with street violence.

Information Minister Willian Lara on Monday said the recent ruling prohibiting the dailies El Luchador and El Progreso from publishing photographs of violent crime victims was "a positive event for the country."

"Of course it's necessary to report the crimes," Lara said, "But it's not necessary to show the cadaver, and much less in such a morbid manner of having the injury, the blood, and the person's open body organs on the front page."

The July 20 ruling by the Supreme Court, which was selected by the Hugo Chávez-dominated National Assembly, condemned El Luchador and El Progreso for repeatedly publishing lurid photos that it said have a "degenerating and perturbing effect."

The two publications, located in the western town of Ciudad Bolívar, were not fined. Both are mainstream newspapers that sometimes publish bloody photos of murder victims, but do not specialize in them.

"The problem is that they don't want news about crime published," said Carlos Mejías, director of El Progreso, in a telephone interview. "Our readers don't complain about the photos. They complain when the photos don't appear."