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Costa Rica: On Sexual Abuse Of Children

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On Nov. 2, an Agence France-Presse report cited justice system officials as saying that an average of seven cases of incest, rape, and physical assault against children are reported every day. In 1990, 467 such crimes were reported, compared to 1,330 in the first 10 months of 1991. Only 12% of such cases are brought to trial, and 4% of defendants are found guilty and subject to sanctions. Paulina Saavedra, psychologist for the Justice Ministry's Children's Defense Office, said sexual abuse of children in Costa Rica is not a new phenomenon, although the incidence of violence and sadism perpetrated against children appears to be increasing. Dr. Gioconda Batres, director of the Fundacion Ser y Crecer, which treats incest victims, estimates that 90% of sexual abuse cases are never reported. According to the Foundation, approximately 95% of abusers are men, and incest accounts for 80% of sexual crimes against girls. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 11/02/91)

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