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Cucchi trial requested for 5 Carabinieri (3)

Three accused of involuntary manslaughter

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(ANSA) - Rome, February 14 - Rome prosecutors have requested that five Carabinieri police be sent to trial over the death in custody of Stefano Cucchi in October 2009, sources said Tuesday.

Three of the Carabinieri are accused of involuntary manslaughter. They allegedly beat the young draughtsman after his arrest on October 15, 2009. The other two are accused of calumny and making false declarations. Cucchi died in a custodial wing of Rome's Sandro Pertini Hospital on October 22, 2009, a week after he was picked up on minor drug charges. A charge of involuntary manslaughter has been laid against Alessio Di Bernardo, Raffaele D'Alessandro and Francesco Tedesco, who were on duty at the Roma Appia station the night of Cucchi's arrest.

Tedesco is also accused of making false statements. Roberto Mandolini, interim commander of the station, is charged with calumny and making false statements. Tedesco is also charged with calumny, as well as the fifth Carabiniere, Vincenzo Nicolardi. The three Carabinieri charged with involuntary manslaughter are also charged with abuse of authority for subjecting Cucchi to "detention measures not allowed by law".

The Cucchi case has caused widespread public dismay after several trials springing from an initial investigation failed to find any culprits, even though Cucchi's body showed signs of him being the victim of brutality.

Last year five Pertini doctors were acquitted of manslaughter charges over Cucchi's death after Italy's supreme Cassation Court had ordered a fresh appeals trial against them.

The Carabinieri police who arrested Cucchi struck him with "slaps, punches and kicks" prosecutors wrote in last month's notification that they had concluded an investigation into the case.

The blows caused a "bad fall with an impact on the ground in the rear area" which, "combined with the negligent conduct of the health personnel treating Cucchi at

the Sandro Pertini hospital (in Rome), led to his death".

Stefano Cucchi's sister Ilaria expressed satisfaction last month.

"I don't now how the road ahead will be, but finally we'll talk about the truth, that is homicide," said Ilaria Cucchi, who has campaigned tirelessly for truth and justice in her brother's case.

Rome prosecutors made no mention of an epileptic fit that Stefano Cucchi suffered in custody after being arrested among the causes of his death.

An expert report by Francesco Introna for a preliminary investigations judge referred to an epileptic fit as a probable cause of death.

The prosecutors' accusations cannot be proven, the defence lawyer of one of the officers said last month.

"We believe that this accusation cannot be proven in court, as the elements it is based on cannot be found in the (case) documents, never mind in the expert report for the preliminary investigations judge," said lawyer Eugenio Pini.

Cucchi died in a custodial hospital wing on the night between October 22 and 23, 2009, a week after he was picked up on the minor drug charges.

His body showed signs he had sustained a brutal beating at some point during his detention, and an autopsy revealed he was severely dehydrated, had two broken vertebrae and internal organ damage.

Cucchi's parents said he was in perfectly good health the day he was arrested, but appeared at a court hearing the next day with black eyes and his face covered with bruises.

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