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Police must be held accountable in Delhi child rape case: Amnesty International

Amnesty International India has called for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the alleged misconduct of police officials in a case of abduction and rape of a 5-year old girl in New Delhi.

“This case shows the appalling extent of indifference in the police to violence against women and girls, and the inadequacy of internal processes to ensure professional conduct”, said G. Ananthapadmanabhan, Chief Executive of Amnesty International India.

On 15 April 2012, the 5-year old girl went missing from her home in New Delhi. Two days later, she was found by neighbours in a locked room in the same building with severe internal injuries and bruises.

The girl’s uncle told Amnesty International that the police had delayed formally registering a complaint when the family reported that she had gone missing. After the girl was found, the police refused to register a case of rape. The girl’s uncle said that after the media began to report on the case, police offered the family a bribe of Rs. 2000 to stay silent, and told them to be thankful that the girl was still alive.

The girl is being treated at a public hospital in New Delhi, and doctors say she is out of danger. A suspect - a neighbour living in the same building - was arrested on 20 April 2013. Two police officials have now been suspended and are facing an internal police inquiry.

“The police must be held accountable for their shocking levels of apathy. They urgently need to review police processes to ensure that all cases of rape and sexual violence – not just those highlighted by the media - are fully and promptly investigated. Those who fail to do their job must be held accountable. Mere changes in the law are not enough. Robust implementation is essential”, said Ananthapadmanabhan.

Amnesty International has also called for any suspects in the case to be prosecuted in accordance with international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty.

In April, the government of India passed new laws on violence against women which contained both positive and regressive provisions. One of the more positive provisions made it punishable for a police official to fail to record information given relating to crimes of violence against women. India has international legal obligations to take appropriate and effective measures to prevent and punish all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, whether by public or private acts.

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