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Brazil: Prison rape exposes increasing abuse of women

Women in Brazil are the hidden victims of a crumbling detention system that exposes them to rape and other ill treatment, said Tim Cahill, Amnesty International's researcher on Brazil.

The statement came as reports emerged of the case of a young woman in the state of Pará -- northern Brazil -- who was left in a police cell with 20 men for a month and repeatedly sexually abused.

"We receive extensive reports of women in detention who suffer sexual abuse, torture, substandard healthcare and inhuman conditions, showing that this case is far from isolated but continues to be hidden from the public," said Tim Cahill.

Even though women in Brazil make up a small percentage of the overall prison population, their numbers in detention are rising. There is a desperate need for the Government to address their needs, which are rarely if ever met.

The case also highlights concerns around the treatment of juveniles illegally held with adults around Brazil.

"At a time when some authorities and the media are consistently calling for a reduction of the age of criminal responsibility, this case shows how far Brazil is from ensuring the necessary minimum protections for its youth," said Tim Cahill.

While Amnesty International recognises that the federal and state authorities have responded rapidly to this case, many others go unreported or uninvestigated. It is essential that the authorities act in all such cases - not only those which receive extensive national and international media coverage.

Amnesty International calls on State Governor Ana Julia Carepa and on the federal authorities to:

- o investigate the allegations and bring those responsible to justice, ensuring that the victim and her family receive effective protection
- o urgently review the whole of the detention system to ensure women are not exposed to human rights abuses and that juveniles are not illegally held with adults.

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