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Public outrage highlights the need for an independent body in Ukraine to investigate crimes by officials

Recent events in a village in southern Ukraine have once again highlighted the need for Ukraine to tackle the problem of impunity for crimes by officials. An angry crowd of around two hundred people attacked a police station in southern Ukraine on the night of 1 July in response to reports about the gang rape and assault of 29 year-old Irina Krashkova by two police officers and a taxi driver. The crowd smashed the windows of the police station and managed to force their way inside, demanding the two officers be handed over to them, before riot police arrived at 2 am on 2 July to disperse them.

Amnesty International has today written to President Yanukovich asking him to expedite the creation of the State Bureau of Investigation, as provided for by the new Criminal Procedural Code, to ensure that all allegations of crimes, including torture and other ill-treatment, by officials are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated.

The demonstrations in Vradiyivka are a clear expression of public frustration and lack of trust in the current system for investigating crimes committed by officials. If public trust is to be established, systemic changes must be made to the way allegations of crimes by officials are investigated.

On 27 June 2013 Irina Krashkova was admitted to hospital with three fractures to her skull and severe lacerations and bruising all over her body. Since then she has undergone two operations to remove fragments of her skull from her brain and to repair lacerations on her body, including reattaching one of her lips which was half torn off in the attack. Doctors told reporters that she will require further surgery to attach metal plates to her skull and to reconstruct her face. She remains in hospital.

Irina Krashkova told reporters that while returning home from a disco on the evening of the 26 June, she was dragged into a car by three men, two of whom she recognized as off-duty police officers from Vradiyivka police station. They drove her to a nearby forest, beating her along the way.

When they arrived at the forest she said the men dragged her out of the car and continued hitting her. Then the two policemen took turns to rape her. During the rape, the third man repeatedly punched her in the face. After the rape, they continued to beat her, then left her lying in the forest. She said she heard them return some time later to look for her, but she managed to crawl into some long grass and hide, believing they intended to kill her. In the morning she managed to get to a nearby mill, from where she was taken to hospital.

On 2 July, following the attack on the police station, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that the Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Mykolayiv region and the Head of the Vradiyivka district police station had both been dismissed. The Prosecutor General's office also announced that the Vradiyivka district prosecutor had been replaced. A criminal investigation is currently underway into the assault and all three men are now in detention.

The past failures of the Ukrainian authorities to effectively investigate allegations of such violations and the failure to bring disciplinary and criminal proceedings against those responsible

has led to a climate of impunity, undermining the principle that no one, including the police, is above the law, and leaving victims without an effective remedy and reparation. Only when every allegation of torture and other ill-treatment and other crimes by officials is followed by a prompt and effective response will the current culture of impunity for such crimes be overcome, and can public trust in the system be established.

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