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## **Papua New Guinea: Police must act urgently to save captured women accused of “sorcery”**

Police in Papua New Guinea are not doing enough to ensure the release of a seriously injured woman currently detained by a group that accuses her of practising “sorcery”, Amnesty International said on Wednesday.

The woman and her two daughters have been held captive in Lopele in Bana District, Southern Bougainville since early last week.

The woman has critical injuries with a severe laceration to her neck after being attacked, according to information Amnesty International has received. Another three women have been prevented from leaving the district to seek essential medical care after locals set up road blocks.

The police response so far has involved a sole officer being sent to Lopele to negotiate the release of these six women. Last week, in a related incident a woman was beheaded after she was also accused of “sorcery”.

"The response of the police to this and other appalling similar incidents in Bougainville and Papua New Guinea has so far been seriously inadequate," said Kate Schuetze, Amnesty International Pacific Researcher.

"The regional police headquarters must direct all available resources to save this woman's life and ensure her and her daughters' safe release."

"The government needs to provide the police with all the resources needed in order to protect this family and all others at risk of future attacks," she added.

This is the latest case of sorcery related violence in PNG, with reports 6 women and one man were attacked with hot metal rods over the Easter break, after a community made similar accusations against them. The man managed to escape while the fate of the six women is unknown.

"The police have a responsibility to protect the public from harm and maintain law and order. This latest incident shows they are falling short when it comes to ‘sorcery’ related attacks," said Kate Schuetze.

Amnesty International has previously highlighted the use of sorcery allegations to commit horrific acts of violence against people, mostly women in PNG, usually ending in murder.

The organization again calls for the repeal of the Sorcery Act, which currently protects and reduces the sentences for those that have assaulted or murdered someone they accused of sorcery.