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PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
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Bangladesh must protect survivors of post-election sexual violence

Purnima Rani Shil's case shows the cost of making a survivor wait nearly a decade for a verdict after an attack linked to an election.

What we know

Bangladeshi reporting documents the October 8, 2001 attack on Purnima Rani Shil, then a schoolgirl who had served as a polling agent in Sirajganj. On May 4, 2011, a court sentenced 11 men to life imprisonment. Other reporting and a judicial commission described wider post-election violence, including attacks on religious minorities. Shil has since spoken publicly and pursued a role in politics. Her decisions about how to tell her story deserve respect. [1–5]

Our position

A survivor of violence should not have to wait nearly a decade for a verdict, and no one should be attacked for taking part in an election. Survivors have the right to decide how, and whether, their stories are told. Bangladesh is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. [6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Establish confidential, survivor-led reporting channels during and after elections.
2. Provide legal and psychosocial support with survivors' consent.
3. Fund prompt investigations with effective witness protection.
4. Require election authorities to document patterns of intimidation and refer cases for independent investigation regardless of party affiliation.

Supporting information

1. 11 jailed for life for rape of Sirajganj schoolgirl
2. Purnima Shil, the 2001 post-election gang-rape victim, buys AL nomination form
3. Purnima Shil hopes for MP seat
4. Rape and torture empties the villages | UK news | The Guardian
5. 25 ministers, MPs complicit
6. CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence
7. United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

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Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*