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**Nothing less**



Civil Society activists rally against the rape of a minor girl in Lahore and the government's failure to arrest the culprits. INP

# Civil society condemns all paedophilia cases

Staff Report

**ISLAMABAD:** The civil society activists of the twin cities condemned the wilful destruction of valuable forensic evidence, including the victim's clothes.

The cases have been reported in Sunder, Faisalabad, Dera Ismail Khan, Manga Mandi, Gujranwala, Kasur, Peshawar, Shujaabad, Bhakkar, Sargodha, Karachi and Chachro.

During a demonstration at F6 Markaz, organised by the Aurat Foundation's partner networks including Pakistan Gender Coalition and Women's Leader's Groups, to protest against the rape of a minor girl in Lahore and the government's failure to arrest the culprits, the civil society pledged to continue the protest.

They said they would raise their voice against this inhumanity, as well as protest against the blatant corruption, indifference and utter failure of the law-enforcing agencies in identifying and arresting the perpetrators.

They also criticised the callousness of hospital security, medico-legal examiners, forensic examiners and other government agencies.

They demanded transparency in releasing the miss-

ing video clips of the Ganga Ram Hospital security cameras and condemned the wilful destruction of valuable forensic evidence, including the victim's clothes.

The rally was led by rights activists Mukhtaran Mai, Justice (r) Majida Rizvi, former chairperson NCSW, Anis Haroon, former Chairperson NCSW, Uzma Noorani, Naeem Mirza, Dr Tahira Aftab, Shagufa Alizai.

They said the political and bureaucratic pressure on the highly corrupt and politicised police force resulted in faulty investigations and prosecution, culminating in a conviction rate of less than 5 percent in rape cases.

This, along with patriarchal attitudes, social stigma and the remnants of the 1979 Hudood Ordinance, resulted in non-reporting of the majority of cases of rape and paedophilia, they said.

Rape and paedophilia are extremely heinous crimes, not just against an individual but against the society and the state; thus the survivor's family must not be pressurised to accept any out-of-court settlement through the police or perpetrators' influence, they said. The federal and provincial governments must urgent-

ly enact the children's protection laws including maximum punishments of imprisonment until death, without possibility of parole, remission or pardon for paedophilia and rape convicts, they said and added paedophilia perpetrators must undergo psychiatric treatment in prison.

They said the government must provide free, medical and post-trauma psychiatric treatment for the survivors' rehabilitation and support for their immediate families too.

The media, the government and politicians must respect the survivor and her family's privacy and dignity, by not exploiting them in media-rating wars. The print and electronic media must adhere to the Gender-Sensitive Code of Ethics they had voluntarily adopted since 2004 i.e. no identification, naming or depiction of GBV survivors.

They said the electronic media should devote 5 percent of airtime to public service messages to change societal attitudes towards women and children, especially girls. The federal and provincial governments needed to change education curricula towards positive portrayal of girls and women, human rights, ethics, tolerance and humanity.