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## Civil society protest against minor girl's rape continues



**ISLAMABAD: Mukhtaran Mai and others holding a demonstration to condemn sexual assaults against women and minor girls. — DNA**

### Our correspondent

Islamabad

Continuing their protest to express condemnation against the rape of a minor girl in Mughalpura, Lahore, and government's failure to immediately arrest the culprits so far, the civil society representatives and human right activists gathered at the F-6 Markaz in large number again on Thursday.

They were holding the placards and chanted slogans against the failure of the government to control incidents that are blatant violation of human rights and expressed concern that the law enforcing agencies are trying to cover the incident. They claimed that media is investigating

the incident more vigorously as compared to the law enforcing agencies. The rally was led by rights activists like Mukhtaran Mai.

During a huge demonstration in F-6 Markaz on Monday, organised by Aurat Foundation's partner networks, including Pakistan Gender Coalition and Women's Leader's Groups, civil society pledged to continue the protest and raise their voices against this inhumanity, as well as to protest the blatant corruption, callousness, indifference and utter failure of the law enforcing agencies in identifying and arresting the perpetrators.

They demanded transparency in releasing the missing video clips of Ganga Ram hospital security cameras. The rally was led by rights activists demanding immediate arrest of culprits.

They said that rape and paedophilia are extremely heinous crimes, not just against an individual, but against society and the state, thus the survivor's family must not be pressurized to accept any out-of-court settlement or compensation through the police or perpetrators' influence.

They called for urgent enactment of long-pending Children's Protection laws, including maximum punishments of life-long imprisonment until death, without possibility of parole, remission or pardon for paedophilia, rape and gang-rape convicts at federal and provincial level.

They suggested that paedophilia perpetrators must compulsorily undergo psychiatric treatment in prison and that government must provide free, highest quality surgical, medical and post-trauma psychiatric treatment for the survivors' rehabilitation and support for their immediate families too.

They urged the media, government,

## Arrest of rapists urged

**Myra Imran**

Islamabad

Representatives of the civil society organisations demanded the government to immediately arrest culprits of the rape of a minor girl in Mughalpura, Lahore.

They expressed concern over the increasing number of the cases of violence against women and pointed out that space for women and human rights is shrinking in policy and institutions at the provincial and federal level.

Representatives of around 150 organisations from around the country gathered under the banner of Pakistan Gender Coalition (PGC), an initiative of Gender Equity Programme of Aurat Foundation.

They expressed their opinion and a need of unanimous voice at the first consultative meeting of PGC titled "Structure, Strategy and Future Directions" held on Thursday. The meeting was formally inaugurated by Chief Operating Officer of Aurat Foundation Naeem Mirza.

In his inaugural speech, he condemned the merger of Federal Ministry of Human Rights with the Federal Ministry of Law. He said recent decisions reflect that women and human rights are not the priority of the government.

Naeem pointed out the situation of helplessness at the institutions created

specifically for women giving the example of Gender Crime Cell (GCC) and National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). The GCC was created in 2006 and till now, there are only 2 officials in the cell against the 23 approved posts. The NCSW is still without any funds.

Speaking on this occasion, Chief of Party GEP Simi Kamal highlighted achievements of GEP.

She said GEP has facilitated 500,000 women in receiving Computerised National Identity Cards and has reached 25 million people through its media initiatives.

Presentation was followed by panel discussion where educationist Tahira Aftab highlighted the need to include more sensitive and basic issues in the circle of research. She encouraged every individual to indulge in research in their daily routine instead of depending on a thirds source for information.

Seema Tahir suggested three minutes of public service messages to promote women and human rights in all satellite channels. She stressed for the involvement of men in all gender specific initiatives to create sustainable impact. A number of women beneficiaries then came up on stage to narrate their tales. Women survivors spoke about their efforts and the support extended by the programme.

and politicians to respect the survivor and her family's privacy and dignity, by not exploiting them in media-rating wars, or political point-scoring photo opportunities and said that print and elec-

tronic media must adhere to the gender-sensitive code of ethics they was voluntarily adopted in 2004 which stresses for no identification, naming or depiction of GBV survivors.