

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

FEARS FOR WOMEN ACCUSED OF 'SORCERY'

Helen Rumbali, three unnamed women (f)

A seriously injured woman and her two daughters are being held in Papua New Guinea by a group that accuses them of practising "sorcery". There are grave fears for their safety following the beheading of a woman last week after she was also accused of "sorcery". The response from the police has so far been seriously inadequate.

The woman has serious injuries with a severe laceration to her neck after being attacked on or around 2 April 2013, according to sources in the country. The three women are being prevented from leaving Lopele, Bana District, Southern Bougainville, to seek essential medical care after locals set up road blocks. They are now being held at a basic medical clinic by members of the community that accuse them of practising "sorcery". The police response so far has been to send a single officer to Lopele to negotiate the release of these women.

On or around 4 April, woman's rights activist and school teacher Helen Rumbali was beheaded in front of community members after she was also accused of "sorcery". Police were present at the incident but reported that they were unable to intervene due to the hostility of the crowd.

In March, Papua New Guinea's Constitutional and Law Reform Commission called on the government to repeal the Sorcery Act 1971, which currently reduces the sentences for those that have assaulted or murdered someone they accused of sorcery.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- * Demand the Bougainville Police use all available resources to secure the safe release of the three women currently detained unlawfully in Lopele, Bana District, Southern Bougainville;
- * Urge the authorities to provide protection and medical care to any survivors and their families in accordance with their wishes;
- * Urge the authorities to conduct immediate and impartial investigations into all sorcery-related attacks and killings to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice;
- * Call on them to repeal the Sorcery Act 1971, in line with the March 2013 recommendation of the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 MAY 2013 TO: (Time difference = GMT + 10 hrs / BST + 9 hrs)**Bougainville Police
Superintendent****Paul Kamuai**

Provincial Police

Headquarters

Post Office Buka

ACP ARB, Papua New

Guinea

Fax: 00675 9739722

Salutation: Superintendent

Kamuai

**Royal Papua New Guinea
Constabulary****Commissioner of Police****Tom Kulunga**

Commissioner of Police

Royal Papua New Guinea

Constabulary

PO Box 85

Konedobu

Papua New Guinea

Fax: 00675 322 6163

Salutation: Police

Commissioner Kulunga

Justice Minister**Kerenga Kua**

Justice Minister and Attorney

General

PO Box 591

Waigani

Papua New Guinea

Fax: 00675 323 3661

Salutation: The Hon. Mr Kua

- * Please note that fax and internet services to PNG may be unreliable. If you are unable to get through, please fax or email to your nearest diplomatic representatives in your country.

PLEASE SEND COPIES OF YOUR APPEAL TO

Her Excellency Ms Winnie Anna Kiap
Papua New Guinea High Commission
14 Waterloo Place
London
SW1Y 4AR.
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

These incidents are the latest in a series of attacks against people accused of "sorcery" in Papua New Guinea, which in most cases have resulted in women being murdered. Earlier this month, there were reports of six women and one man being abused with hot metal rods, after a community made similar accusations against them. The man managed to escape while the fate of the six women is unknown.

In February, 20-year-old Kepari Leniata was stripped, tied up, doused in petrol and burned alive by relatives of a young boy she was accused of using witchcraft to kill. Two people were charged as a result of this incident.

The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women has noted that women, particularly widows or women without family to protect them, are disproportionately affected by "sorcery"-related violence in Papua New Guinea.

PLEASE CHECK WITH THE INDIVIDUALS AT RISK PROGRAMME AT AIUK BEFORE SENDING APPEALS AFTER 24 MAY 2013

Individuals at Risk Programme, Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA, 0207 033 1572, iar@amnesty.org.uk.