

Amnesty International Report 2015/2016...Human Rights body records increasing violence against Women and Girls

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Amnesty International, one of the largest human rights organisations globally, has published its report on Guyana for the period 2015 to 2016. According to the report, there continues to be high levels of sexual and other physical violence against women and girls.

The organisation referenced a Latin American Public Opinion Project survey which revealed that domestic violence was highly accepted in Guyana. According to Amnesty International, the Guyana Police Force had registered 300 reports of rape up to November 2015. This was much higher than 2014 when 238 reports were recorded for the same period.

The organisation made contact with women's rights groups and based on the information received concluded that the police force continues to fail to take reports seriously. The report said that the conviction rates for sexual offences remained alarmingly low.

The report made reference to a former Minister of Health who was charged with using insulting language towards a women's rights activist who would have confronted him on issues of maternal health.

In April 2015, former Health Minister Dr. Bheri Ramsaran was leading a protest action outside of the Whim Magistrate's Court. The purpose of the protest was to offer support to former President Bharrat Jagdeo.

During the protest, well-known activist Sherlina Nageer interjected and asked Dr Ramsaran whether Jagdeo hasn't abused his wife. Ramsaran responded saying "Shut your mouth and get out my face." The incident was recorded and circulated in the media. Ramsaran later apologised for his actions.

The report went on to give insight into other human rights issues which continue to persist in Guyana.

The report says that there continues to be allegations of excessive force being used by members of the Guyana Police Force during arrests and detention. The Universal Periodic Review had offered recommendations to Guyana in this regard.

According to the report, these recommendations were accepted and used to strengthen the independence of the Police Complaints Authority and increase its resources and capacity. Concerning Children's rights, the report stated that corporal punishment in schools continued which is in contravention of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

It noted that despite the government having consultations with civil society on the use of corporal punishment, the law remained unchanged.
