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Afghan girl beheaded after refusing man's marriage proposal

By *Jeff Stacklin*

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A 14-year-old Afghan girl was beheaded and killed in an attack by two men, one of whom apparently asked her to marry him.

The attack happened Tuesday, a day before new legislation was introduced in Congress calling on the U.S. government to take steps to help protect Afghan women and girls as the U.S. military prepares to exit Afghanistan.

Gasitina, a student, was beheaded in the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province. The attack was initially reported by local media, and was confirmed by Amnesty International researcher Horia Mosadiq in an email.

The girl was fetching water when she was accosted, according to reports. The men, who have not been identified, were arrested by police. The girl and her parents had refused a marriage proposal by one of the men, according to the Amnesty International report.

This was the 15th deadly attack on a female victim in Kunduz in 2012, the human rights organization said.

"Amnesty International is very concerned about the violations against women in Afghanistan," said Cristina Finch, director of the organization's Women's Human Rights program.

Amnesty reported a similar incident in October, when a young woman was murdered and her throat slashed. In that case, the woman apparently refused to work as a prostitute.

Although it appears such attacks are increasing in frequency, it may be that the world outside Afghanistan is just beginning to hear about them, Finch said.

On Wednesday, Sen. Bob Casey, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, and Kay Bailey Hutchison, a Republican from Texas, introduced the Afghan Women and Girls' Security Promotion Act. If passed in its current form, the bill addresses how women's security will be monitored as the U.S. military withdraws from the country.

The bill also calls for improved gender sensitivity among Afghanistan's national security forces and recruitment of women within the ranks of those forces.

Amnesty International USA's executive director Suzanne Nossel applauded Casey and Hutchison for introducing the bill.

"As the United States military transitions out of Afghanistan, Afghan women's human rights continue to be at grave risk and demand urgent attention," Nossel said in a statement. "The fate of women will be a crucial determinant of that country's prospects for a stable and prosperous future."

In a report on Afghan violence against women, Amnesty International wrote that one of the justifications of the U.S. military going into the country in 2001 was to ensure the protection of human rights, including women's rights.

"More than 10 years after the overthrow of the Taliban, modest advances have been made for girls and women in Afghanistan," the report said. "But much remains to be done. Peace talks between the Taliban, Afghan government and the U.S. jeopardize even these modest gains as the U.S. searches for a quick exit."