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Pajhwok

Provincial governor's son honour-raped

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SHIBERGHAN - Angry villagers took the law into their own hands when they "honour-raped" the sons of two top officials in Jawzjan province found having sex with young women.

The act happened nearly two weeks ago when farmers and herdsmen saw the son of the Jawzjan governor, Yama, 30, and his friend, Hashmatullah, 28, the son of the second top provincial official, the police chief, with two women in the desert, a reliable source told Pajhwok Afghan News.

The farmers, angry at the behaviour of the men, carried out their own punishment by raping them, said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A local official, who did not wish to give his name, confirmed the incident, saying the sons of the governor and police chief were gang raped for satisfying their sexual needs with the two women, named as Shokreya, 24, and Jamila, 22.

"The farmers tore the clothes of the two young men with sickles and raped them," in the Dasht-e Laile desert, north of the provincial capital, Shiberghan, the official added.

They also confiscated Yama and Hashmatullah's pistols and several thousand US dollars. The two women were not harmed, he said.

The men, left naked in the desert, were only able to return home by wearing the women's burqas.

"When the men returned to the city, they were not able to sit on chair," said a police official.

The provincial governor, Muhammad Hashim Zare, and the police chief, Brig. Gen. Khalilullah Aminzada, called a medic from the city hospital to provide painkillers, the police official added.

Zare has refused to speak to the media, but Aminzada has denied his son was even in the desert. Both have alleged they are being targeted by a smear campaign.

There have been growing calls for the two young men to be tried for their actions. If they were ordinary people, officials would have taken serious steps against them, said a civil society representative.

The head of civil society organisations in the province has called for street protests if the sons of the governor and police chief are not tried for their behaviour.

Yama and Hashmatullah were also accused of "disturbing" female students at schools and university.

The head of the crime branch at Jawzjan police department, Col. Abdul Malik Mamnoon, said they had not received an official complaint and would not investigate unless they did so.

There have also been allegations that the governor and police chief have tried to cover up the incident.

Farmers and village herdsmen told an independent legal organisation that their gang-rape was a "revenge-driven act", or honour-raping.

"We have heard such news from ordinary people, but have not received any letter from the police department, introducing a suspect," the head of the local Attorney General's office, Mir Alam Moheb, told Pajhwok Afghan News.

Hashmatullah, who worked at a provincial branch of the private Kabul Bank, has reportedly been fired from his position following the case.

But, the deputy head of the bank branch, Nasir Ahmad, said Hashmatullah was on leave.

Hashatmullah has not been seen around after the incident, but Yama, the governor's son, is still in the city but avoids talking on the issue.

The police chief has asked the Interior Ministry for a transfer out of the province, a local official said.

Mavlavi Abdul Hai Hayat, the head of the Provincial Council, the local elected body, said he would "reveal the case without any fear from the governor and the police chief if I receive convincing documents proving the incident".

The spokesman for the governor, Mahboobullah Zare, said it was a plot against the governor designed by his opponents.

Asked why the governor has not spoken to the media about the case, Zare said, "If nothing happened, why they should talk to media."

The police chief said the plot was designed by organised criminals.

"My son has never gone to the Laile desert and it is a plot involving the farmers," he said.

The spokesman for the Interior Ministry, Zemaray Bashari, said he had no information about the alleged gang-rape.

The two women, living on the outskirts of the city, have been told to leave the area. A local teacher said villagers had given them a two-week deadline to flee.