

Yakine, 15: Sexual Violence and Child Protection in Tunisia

A 15-year-old girl who disappeared in Tunis in September was found severely injured a week later, after allegedly being drugged, held captive and raped. Her case has drawn a government response, a wave of anger online, and calls for restraint.

BY MARIEM KHIARI

YAKINE, 15, left her home in Tunis on September 19 to meet a friend for coffee. She did not come back. A week later, she resurfaced on social media, severely injured, after allegedly being drugged, held captive and raped.

Several media outlets reported that the friend had lured her into a trap. Her mother reported her missing the same day.

Two days in Mellassine

Yakine was reportedly held for two days in a house in Mellassine, a working-class neighborhood in western Tunis. *La Presse de Tunisie*, the French-language daily, reported that she had been drugged, abducted and raped by a group.

Private radio station Mosaïque FM, citing security sources, said she had been admitted to the intensive care unit at Charles-Nicolas Hospital, with injuries including liver damage. In a video, her mother said her daughter's condition remained critical.

The investigation

The Sijoumi security district has opened an investigation under the authority of the public prosecutor and identified two main suspects, one of them a nurse. The number of people involved has not been confirmed: reports range from several suspects to twelve. Mosaïque FM reported that most of the suspects were minors.

Investigators have not yet questioned the victim.

According to Yakine's mother, officers were attacked with stones and a sword during the police operation. A separate investigation into that incident has reportedly been opened.

Officials respond

In a statement on September 29, the Ministry of Family, Women, Children and the Elderly said its regional delegation and the child protection office would monitor the girl's situation and stay in contact with her family. The ministry announced immediate psychological and social support, and urged the public not to share photographs of the minor, calling their circulation a violation of children's rights.

Fatma Mseddi, a member of the Assembly of People's Representatives, called for patience until the investigation is complete, and for the prosecution of anyone found to be involved in, or facilitating, drug-trafficking networks.

Rumors and anger online

Rumors of Yakine's death spread on Monday, September 28. A security source quoted by Mosaïque FM denied them the same day, saying the girl was alive and receiving medical care.

On social media, users called for the death penalty and chemical castration. Others shared photographs and names of people allegedly involved. *Kapitalis*, a Tunisian online news outlet, warned against declaring suspects guilty before any court ruling.

The feminist NGO Aswat Nissa, which campaigns for women's rights and gender equality in Tunisia, called for a transparent investigation and for existing legal protection mechanisms to be properly enforced.