Police volunteer in India convicted in rape and murder of doctor that sparked widespread protests



India doctors protests

A police volunteer was found guilty of the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in India, a crime that sparked countrywide protests and hospital strikes last year.

Judge Anirban Das said the sentence for 33-year-old Sanjay Roy will be announced on Monday and could range from life imprisonment to the death penalty.

Protests erupted in West Bengal last August to demand justice after the body of a 31-year-old trainee doctor was found with multiple injuries in a lecture hall in Kolkata's state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital. Authorities at the time said the woman had gone to the lecture hall to rest during a night shift when she was attacked.An autopsy later found the victim had been raped and assaulted before she died. It also suggested she resisted and may have been tortured before being murderedLates

A police volunteer was found guilty of the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in India, a crime that sparked countrywide protests and hospital strikes last year.

Judge Anirban Das said the sentence for 33-year-old Sanjay Roy will be announced on Monday and could range from life imprisonment to the death penalty.

Protests erupted in West Bengal last August to demand justice after the body of a 31-year-old trainee doctor was found with multiple injuries in a lecture hall in Kolkata's state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital. Authorities at the time said the woman had gone to the lecture hall to rest during a night shift when she was attacked.

Junior Doctors Protest Rally In Kolkata Demanding Justice For Victim Of RG Kar Medical College Rape And Murder Case

Junior doctors take out a protest rally from SSKM Hospital to Esplanade demanding justice for the murdered RG Kar doctor and security in hospitals at Esplanade on October 4, 2024 in Kolkata, India.

Samir Jana/Hindustan Times via Getty Images

An autopsy later found the victim had been raped and assaulted before she died. It also suggested she resisted and may have been tortured before being murdered.

Roy was arrested a day after the crime but was not officially charged until nearly two months later. He has since consistently maintained his innocence and told the court that he was not guilty.

The trial in the case was fast-tracked through India's notoriously sluggish legal system and arguments began in November. It also highlighted once again the chronic issue of violence against women in the country.

After the incident, doctors and medical students across India held protests and rallies demanding justice and better security for them. Thousands of women across the country also protested on the streets, demanding justice for the victim as they participated in "Reclaim The Night" marches. Some protesters called for the perpetrator of the crime to be given the death penalty.The incident highlighted rising sexual violence against women in India and prompted India's Supreme Court to set up a national task force that suggested ways to enhance safety measures in government hospitals.

Many cases of crimes against women go unreported in India due to the stigma surrounding sexual violence, as well as a lack of faith in the police. Women's rights activists say the problem is particularly acute in rural areas, where the community sometimes shames victims of sexual assault and families worry about their social standing.

LENS ASIA