

'Very cruel' mother jailed for death

Winnie Chong

The District Court has sentenced a single mother to six years for neglecting her infant son who eventually starved to death.

In sentencing 32-year-old So Suk-ye, Deputy District Court Judge Pang Chung-ping described her as "very cruel."

The judge said the baby was very skinny yet the mother did not seek help until it was too late.

So reportedly showed no remorse, told lies and claimed that she fed her baby properly but he was unable to absorb the nutrients.

The judge said the reports he received suggested So is capable of repeating the offense. She has four other children.

Judge Pang said So was convicted at a hearing after she changed her plea to not guilty. Earlier, she pleaded guilty to a charge of willful neglect.

So is not classified as mentally retarded by law and is not mentally ill either so the judge saw no reason to reduce the sentence.

Judge Pang said he had to pass a deterrent sentence to show the seriousness of the offense.

The court heard that the baby weighed 2.85 kilograms at birth but had gained only 160 grams at the time of death three months later.

He did not have a birth certificate and was not named in court.

In an earlier hearing, Judge Pang said he found the photographs of the baby shocking. His "thinness is worse than the starving children in Africa and the Third World," he said.



So Suk-ye, hiding from the camera, was described as 'very cruel' by the judge. Reports suggest she could repeat the offense. ERIC WONG

The judge has asked the Social Welfare Department to check if the mother is fit to take care of her other children when she completes her jail sentence.

Jessica Ho Oi-chu, director of Against Child Abuse, said parents should never neglect their children. "If parents have problems, they should seek help from their family, friends or the community," Ho said.

Susan So Suk-yin, director of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children, welcomed the deterrent sentence.

"The case should remind social workers to be more vigilant in protecting children," she said.

The Social Welfare Department said it will follow up the status of So's remaining children. winnie.chong@singtaonewscorp.com

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