

'77pc cases of honour killings end in acquittal of criminals'

RECORDER REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In Pakistan almost 77 percent cases of honour killings every year end in acquittal of the criminals while lack of courts information, lack of available consolidated data, categorisation of FIRs, and reluctance of persons to comment on the incidence of 'honour' killings were the main reasons hindering the implementation of the law.

This was stated by Maliha Zia, a social activist at the launching ceremony of the pilot study conducted by the Aurat Foundation titled 'Honour killings in Pakistan and compliance of law' organised here on Wednesday. She said that a lot of cases of honour killing were highlighted in the media but were not reported with the police or even if registered not classified as 'honour' killings.

The language used in the FIRs was

not gender sensitive. She also pointed to the fact that courts usually give decisions against the victims by using the provision of 'grave and sudden provocation'. Another factor, which hindered the compliance of law, was the fact that most of the 'honour' crimes were committed by the family members and the 'unwillingness' of the family to lose another family member. Hence, most of the cases end up in forced compromises. She also said that the concerned institutions also lack the commitment of implementation of the law.

An honor killing is the homicide of a member of a family or social group by other members, due to the belief of the perpetrators that the victim has brought dishonor to the family or community. Honor killings are directed mostly against women and girls, but have also

been extended to men.

At least 675 Pakistani women and girls were murdered during the first nine months of the calendar year 2011 for allegedly defaming their family's honour. A total of 675 women and girls were killed in the name of honour across Pakistan from January to September 2011. Around 450 women killed from January to September were accused of having "illicit relations" and 129 of marrying without permission of their elders.

Every year in Pakistan hundreds of women, of all ages and in all parts of the country, are reported killed in the name of honour. Many more cases go unreported. Almost all go unpunished. The lives of millions of women in Pakistan are circumscribed by traditions, which enforce extreme seclusion and submission to men many of whom impose their

virtually control over women with violence.

A woman can be targeted by (individually within) her family for a variety of reasons, including: refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce—even from an abusive husband—or (allegedly) committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that "dishonors" her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life.

Tahira Abdullah, a social activist, said that the only thing which the above-mentioned study lacks is that it didn't cover any district from Seraiki area (Southern Punjab) where she believed 'honour' killing is the most prevailing practice. She also criticised implementing agencies that almost 77 percent of

the 'honour' killings cases, involving killing of women, end in acquittal of the criminals. She also paid tribute to late Shehla Zia, one of the founding leaders of Aurat Foundation, for her vision, knowledge and struggle towards highlighting the issue of 'honour' killings. She said that the civil society must continue efforts working with progressive elements in all legislatures to table revised 'honour' killings bill, rectifying errors of omission. She said, "we all need to work for termination of all forms of parallel judicial systems like jirga, punchayat etc".

The presence of murders termed, as honour killing exist not just in Pakistan but in various countries around the globe. In Pakistan, honour killing have regularly come for consideration before the courts for years.

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