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'Honour' killers taking advantage of lacunae in law: Report

■ MUNIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD — Lack of data from courts, categorisation of FIRs, and people's reluctance to comment on the incidence of honour killings are the main reasons affecting the implementation of the respective laws.

Maliha Zia, author of the pilot study 'Honour Killings in Pakistan and Compliance of Law' Wednesday said one reason for that attitude was there was no mention of "grave and sudden provocation" in the FIRs.

The Legislative Watch Programme for Women's Empowerment, Aurat Foundation, launched the study at a local hotel. Cecilie Landsverk, the Norwegian envoy, was the Chief Guest. Nasreen Azhar, a women rights activist chaired the launching.

Maliha Zia Lari, the author of the study, presented the main findings while Tahira Abdullah, a human rights activist, was the guest speaker.

Cecilie Landsverk referring to the increase in the honour killing cases in Pakistan as reported in the pilot study asked to trace out the history of honour killings in Pakistani society.

She was shocked to learn honour killing was on the rise even in the modern times.

Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer Aurat Foundation, said though

law against honour killings was passed in year 2004, there were many hurdles in its implementation that needed a thorough review.

The study showed a number of cases were highlighted in the media but were not reported with the police or even if registered but not classified as 'honour' killings.

The language used in the FIRs was not gender sensitive. Maliha also pointed out the fact courts usually gave decisions against the victim by using the provision of 'grave and sudden provocation'.

Another factor which hindered the compliance with law was the fact most of the honour crimes were committed by the family members and the unwillingness of the family to lose another family member.

Therefore, most of the cases end up in forced compromise. She said the institutions concerned also lacked commitment required for implementation of law.

Tahira Abdullah also pointed out lack of authentic data. While analysing the study, she said the only thing it lacked was it didn't cover any district from Seraiki area (Southern Punjab) where she believed honour killing was a common practice.

She also criticised implementing agencies saying almost 77 per cent of

the honour killings cases, involving killing of women ended in acquittal of the criminals.

She also paid tributes to late Shehla Zia, one of the founding leaders of Au-

rat Foundation, for her vision, knowledge and struggle for women rights and for highlighting honour killings.

She said the civil society must continue efforts 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."



REPORT LAUNCH: Maliha Zia (left) speaks at the launch of a study she authored about honour killings Wednesday. The Norwegian envoy Cecilie Landsverk, Nasreen Azhar and Tahira Abdullah look on. — Dateline photo

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