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Study on honour killing highlight grim face of society

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ISLAMABAD—Activists at a seminar called for effective implementation of laws to defeat the crime as most of the honour killing cases in the country are largely dismissed by police as private, family affairs. Despite some progress on protection of women's rights, nearly 1,236 honour killings were reported from 2008 to 2010, according to an Aurat Foundation report launched on Wednesday.

The pilot study titled, 'Honour killings in Pakistan and the compliance of law' in collaboration with the Aurat Foundation's legislative watch programme for women empowerment was launched on by Norwegian ambassador to Pakistan Cecilie Landsverk, the chief guest at the ceremony.

The author of the study, Maliha Zia Lari, said that al-

though the law against 'honour' killings was passed in year 2004, but since its implementation, honour killings had actually increased. The law has not had the desired impact because of lack of data from courts, lack of available consolidated data, categorisation of FIRs, and reluctance of persons to comment on the incidence of 'honour' killings were the main reason affecting the implementation of the law.

Maliha Zia, also an advocate, informed that the research was conducted in 2010 to find out how the criminal law amendment was being implemented and included police, court and community evaluations. The study was conducted in Ghotki, Gujrat, Naseerabad and Nowshera. "The highest numbers of cases were reported from Ghotki, while the least number of cases were reported from Nowshera." She added that the

biggest limitation to the study was the lack of consolidated data available. She identified three factors - police, court and community - which are the basic source of informa-

tion in such a case. While studying the FIRs, Maliha Zia said FIRs were gender insensitive as the police preferred to report such incidents as murder instead of honour kill-

ings which leads to misreporting. Most of police officers thought that there was no difference between murder and honour killings. For instance, she said, all details of

the crime were listed but the term "honour killing" was not mentioned in an FIR. "When the term is not mentioned in the FIR, the police record it as a murder, and not as honour killing," she explained.

Tahira Abdullah, rights activist pointed out that "the study however does not cover any district from Seraiki area (Southern Punjab) where honour killing is the most prevailing practice."

She also criticised the law enforcing agencies, adding that "almost 77% of the honour killings cases, involving killing of women, end in acquittal of the criminals."

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 675 women and girls were murdered during the first nine months of the year 2011 for allegedly defaming their family's honour.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Norway Cecilie Landsverk speaks during the launching ceremony of a pilot study on 'Honour Killings in Pakistan and Compliance of Law' organized by Aurat Foundation at a local hotel. Maliha Zia, Nasreen Azhar and Tahira Abdullah are also seen in the picture.—PO photo

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