

■ VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Report shows decrease of 12% in cases

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Annual report on the cases of violence against women (VAW) registered during the year 2012 shows a decrease of 12% in number as compared to last year.

There were around 7,516 cases of violence reported in 2012 as compared to 8,539 in 2011. Abduction and kidnapping were the most frequently reported type of VAW with 1,607 cases of kidnapping and abduction registered by media from all over Pakistan. 1,745 murder cases and 989 cases of domestic violence were reported. There was also a high prevalence of rape and gang rape with 822 reported cases. 575 suicides and 432 cases of "honour killing" were also reported.

The miscellaneous category (which includes attempted suicide, torture, injury, attempt to murder, attempted rape, threat to life, harassment, attempt to kidnap, illegal custody, trafficking of women, 'vanni', forced marriage, child marriage, incest, attempt at 'karo kari', 'watta satta') had a total of 1134 reported cases.

Although the total number of reported cases of violence against women has decreased

by 12 per cent, a deeper analysis shows that several forms of violence have in fact increased. One form, which shows a significant increase in reported cases is burning, with a 144 per cent increase, followed by acid throwing at 89 per cent, domestic violence at 62 per cent, and murder at 11 per cent. Among those that have decreased as compared to last year are sexual assault (47 per cent decrease), 'honour' killing (39 per cent decrease), suicide (24 per cent decrease), abduction/kidnapping (23 per cent decrease) and those in the miscellaneous category (37 per cent decrease).

The findings made part of the Aurat Foundation (AF)'s Annual Report on Violence against Women, which provides detailed analysis of the issues related to VAW in Pakistan. Report says that the statistics this year are the lowest observed in the past 5 years however this may be due to a decrease in registration as well as reporting of such cases as the media was often overloaded with stories of terrorism and political instability.

Out of the total 7,515 number of cases, 4,766 were reported from Punjab. This high number may be due to the fact

that women in Punjab are more able to reach law enforcement and media as compared to women in KP or Balochistan. Overall, nearly 63 per cent cases were reported from Punjab. Sindh had the second highest number with 1628 cases, which constitutes 22 per cent of the total cases. 674 cases were reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Islamabad was noted for 281 cases of VAW, which is a very high number considering its population. Balochistan had a total of 167 reported cases.

Province	No of incidents	Percentage
Punjab	4753	63
Sindh	1628	22
KPK	674	9
Islamabad	281	4
Balochistan	167	2
Total	7516	

Most of the districts noted for highest number of reported cases of violence against women were from Punjab. Karachi, 313, Rawalpindi (754 cases), Lahore (599), Okara (294), Faisalabad (229), Chak-

wal (203), Gujranwala (193), Sheikhpura (176), Multan (129), Quetta (122), Peshawar (157), Sukkur (171), Khairpur (179), Attock (63), Bannu (64) were the top 15 districts with most reported cases of Violence against women. The data also reveals that different types of VAW crime were reported from different regions. From Punjab and Islamabad, abduction was the most frequently reported crime whereas from Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, murder was among the most frequent VAW

crime. While sharing the statistics, writer and analyst of the report Dr Rakhshinda Perveen said 50 per cent of women who suffer violence eventually die. She also pointed that lack of terms for

'marital rape' and cases of 'incest' in national and local languages indicates that our society is insensitive towards these violence and crime.

Child Psychiatrist Dr Amreen Ahmad spoke about the 'psychological effects of violence on women'. Among various forms of VAW, she said social abuse needs special focus as this kind of abuse is usually not considered as violence or deemed traditional or cultural. She said depression and anxiety are the most common side effects of VAW.

Deputy Director, Gender Crime Cell Mahrreen Maqsood said that strength of GCC is far less than the allocated posts. She stressed the need to further strengthen the capacity of Gender Crime Cell as per its mandate. MNA from PML-N Arifa Khalid said even women parliamentarians experience psychological violence within the national and provincial assemblies. She said that media plays vital role in breaking the stereotypes towards women but unfortunately films and dramas further reinforce the same discriminatory role.

National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz said data collected through

media reports does not depict the real magnitude of the problem. Commenting on the role of media in the context of violence against women, she pointed out that most of the time, media highlights only some forms and cases of violence but ignores most dangerous forms of violence.

About NCSW's strategy to combat violence against women, she said that the commission is in the process of developing indicators for the National Baseline Survey on violence against women, which will be conducted in collaboration with National Bureau of Statistics. "The survey will provide firm ground for area based interventions with regard to VAW cases." In addition, she said the commission plans to work on the follow up of selected cases on VAW along with the Gender Crime Cell so that the dynamics and hurdles can be pointed out and raised before the relevant departments. "We need pay especial attention to the institutionalisation all public departments dealing specifically with VAW which also includes NCSW," she said.

Rabecca Hadi, in-charge of the programme, moderated the session and conducted the question-answer session.