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Exemplary punishment demanded for perpetrators of Lahore honour killing

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD/ PESHAWAR: The Aurat Foundation (AF) has demanded immediate arrest of perpetrators involved in murder of a 25-year-old pregnant woman in front of the Lahore High Court on Tuesday for marrying the man of her choice and that exemplary punishment be given to them.

"We demand the federal and provincial governments to take immediate action and ensure that culprits are arrested and convicted," an AF statement issued on Thursday said.

"We also demand that courts do not allow the heirs of the victims to compound the offence and go unpunished," it added. The woman was killed by around two dozen relatives, including her father and brothers, who attacked her and her husband with batons and bricks. Farzana's father, presently in the custody of police, justified the cold-blooded murder as "honour-killing" and said that he did not regret what happened.

"We believe that major lacunas in the Honour Killings Act, 2004, have rendered the law useless as it fails to provide protection to victims and punishment for the perpetrators and supporters of this heinous crime. The act renders the offence of 'honour-killing' as compoundable, thus allowing waiver of Qisas and pardoning of the crime as well as the settlement of the case through payment of compensation. This is one of the biggest loopholes in the law," the



statement added.

The statement further said that the alarming trend of giving social sanction to this kind of offence was one of the main reasons affecting the implementation of the law.

Meanwhile, civil society organisations (CSOs) of KhyberPakhtunkhwa have also demanded the federal government to take action on honour-killing of a pregnant women in Lahore.

The CSOs, including Blue Veins, Noor Education Trust and Khwendo Kor, Baacha Khan Trust Educational Foundation and PCSN,

expressed their deep concern over the killing of Farzana. "Hundreds of women are reportedly killed every year in Pakistan in so-called honour-killings, which are mostly carried out by the woman's family and relatives as punishment for marrying someone without their consent," the CSOs said in a joint statement. The women rights activist believed that such unabashed actions had been "encouraged by the authorities' failure to fulfil their duty to protect citizens' lives, especially the women and the minorities."

"The sheer number of

women falling victim to the so-called honour-killings is enough to dispel all illusions about any interest in saving their lives. In 2013 alone, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded the killing of nearly 900 women in honour-related crimes," the statement reads.

"These women were killed because the state did not confront this feudalistic practice supported by religiosity and bigotry.

"We as women rights activists are shocked by the death of Farzana, who, as in the case of so many other women in Pakistan, was brutally murdered by members of her own family simply because she married a man of her own choice."

The CSOs urged the government to prevent such killings in future and make sure that Farzana's killers did not escape justice by glorifying their dastardly act in the name of honour.

"The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which reviewed Pakistan's record on women's rights last year, expressed concern that despite the 2004 legislation, which criminalized offences in the name of so-called honour, two ordinances known as the Qisas and Diyat Ordinances continue to be applied in these cases.

"As a result, perpetrators are often given legal concessions, light sentences or are pardoned altogether," it added.