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ISLAMABAD: Students holding portraits of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai. — NNI

More than 1,500 women kidnapped in first nine months of 2014 in Pakistan

Aurat Foundation screens Malala Yousafzai receiving Noble Peace Prize in Oslo

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From January to September 2014, 1,543 cases of kidnapping women and 1,256 cases of murder were reported, 1,149 women were raped and gang-raped, 708 women committed suicide and 604 women were killed in the name of 'honour'.

These statistics show that four women kidnapped or abducted, 3 are murdered, 2 commit suicide, 3 are raped or gang raped and 2 are killed in the name of honour every day.

The statistics were shared by Aurat Foundation Director Advocacy Rabeea Hadi at public solidarity event titled 'Apno Ki Yaad' organised on Wednesday to commemorate International Human Rights Day. She said that number of reported cases of rape and gang rape increased up to 17 per cent in 2014 as compared last year.

Women from all walks of life including civil society workers, Parliamentarians, poets and human rights activists participated in the public solidarity event. Victims of violence against women were paid tribute, slogans were chanted, candle were lit and poetry was recited at the event, which ended with the presentation of resolution demanding effective legislation and its implementation for ending violence against women and children. The rally was organised by AAWAZ programme.

National Programme Man-

ager, AAWAZ Programme, Akram Khurshid read the resolutions for the participants. The resolution also demanded the government to declare domestic violence as crime and amend the law on marrying little girls. It said that the law dealing with the anti-women customary practices like 'wanni', 'swara' etc be implemented effectively and jurisdiction of the law shall be extended to regions like Gilgit-Baltistan, Fata and Pata. It recommended strengthening of institutions and organisations supporting the violence-affected-women, so that women can get medico-legal support through one-window operation.

Renowned poetess Kishwar Naheed and Aliya Mirza read their poems on ending violence against women and girls. A signature campaign was also launched during the event demanding ending violence and bringing important legislation and ensuring effective implementation of such laws.

Rabeea Hadi further shared that despite the passage of The Criminal Law (Third Amendment) Act, 2011 (the laws which deals with the anti-women customary practices like 'wanni', 'swara' etc), forced marriages and child marriages still being made e.g. during the nine month period 22 cases of forced marriages and 7 cases of child marriage were reported. "Thus, a total of 7450 of violence against women were re-

ported during the nine months i.e. January to September, 2014, sufficient to realize the increase in violence against women in Pakistan," she said.

Member National Assembly, JUL-F, Asyia Nasir, condemned the forced conversions of minority women and girls and their forced marriage to Muslims. She said that 'women's rights' shall be valued, respected and implemented as 'human rights'.

"In order to end domestic violence from each and every home, we need an effective legislation on domestic violence," she further emphasised. She said that for effective implementation of women friendly laws, the government, law enforcement agencies, human rights organisation and civil society organisations shall work hand-in-hand.

While giving the key findings of the events under '16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women', National Programme Manager, AAWAZ Programme Feroza Zahra, said that women, religious and ethnic minorities and persons with disability are the main focus of AAWAZ Programme.

Giving details of the activities with its partner communities in 450 UC's of 45 districts, she said that data from 26 districts shows that more than 14,823 people attended these activities out of which 10,051 were women; 128,464 signatures/hand prints are received from 39 dis-

tricts which pledged to 'Stop domestic violence, early and forced marriages'; 'Apno ki yaad' memorial in each district at UC level to commemorate the women of that particular area who died and lost their lives due to violence were also held.

Anbreen Ajaib, from AAWAZ Programme said that Pakistan has brilliant girls like Malala Yousafzai, icon of girls' education, and of Irfa Karim an example of brilliant scientific mind. Shazia of SUNGI Development Foundation said that apart from the platform of AAWAZ Programme, we also need awareness raising on individual level as well.

In separate event, Aurat Foundation in collaboration with Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalist (RIUJ) organised a live screening of the award ceremony of Malala getting the Nobel Peace Prize.

The participants appreciated Malala's struggle for girl's education and her courage to stand against all odds in this struggle. They were inspired by her image that 'when worlds is silent, even one voice becomes powerful'.

The public event, rally and Malala's award taking ceremony were organised by the consortium partners of AAWAZ Programme - a five-year programme to strengthen democratic processes in Pakistan by making it more open, inclusive and accountable to citizens. It is funded by DFID and man-

aged by DAI. The programme is being implemented in 45 districts across Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces by Aurat Foundation, SAP-Pk, SPO and Sungi Development Foundation.