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■ DAY FOR ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Effective implementation of laws stressed to protect women's rights

4,308 cases of violence against women registered in Pakistan from January-June this year

Myra Imran
Islamabad

According to statistics collected from media reports, around seven women are murdered, five women are kidnapped or abducted, three are raped or gang raped and one faces domestic violence every day in Pakistan.

The data collected by Aurat Foundation shows that around 4,308 cases of violence against women were reported in media from January to June 2015 period. Among them, 1020 incidents of kidnapping and abduction were reported from different parts of the country besides 709 cases of murder, 596 cases of rape and gang rape, 399 cases of suicide, 186 cases of honour killing, 256 cases of domestic violence and 36 cases of sexual assault. In addition, 30 cases of acid throwing, 23 incidents of burning and 1053 cases of miscellaneous nature were reported in different newspapers and channels around the country.

The statistics were shared by Director Advocacy Aurat Foundation and Co Chair of Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls (EVAW) Alliance Rabia Hadi at a study circle organised by Aurat Foundation in collaboration with Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC). The event was part of the activities held to commemorate the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women.

A number of events such as candle light vigil, study circle, launch of media campaign and press conference were organised to commemorate International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women (VAW) on Wednesday. A large number of people from all walks of life took part of these activities and expressed their opinion regarding issues linked with the VAW.

While presenting statistics, Rabeea Hadi stressed for the effective implementation of existing laws and strengthening of institutions established to protect human rights especially

women rights. She urged media to keep in mind the code of ethics while reporting. "Only some words when published or aired in media are enough to destroy the life of a woman and her whole family," she said. She said that violence is not only physical but also psychological and economical and all have their roots in the patriarchal mindset.

One extreme opinion was witnessed at the study circle when MNA Tahira Aurangzeb, in her welcome remarks, straight straightforwardly blamed women for the violence committed against women in the country. "Every time, women is involved when another women faces violence or discrimination," she said. "Men are innocent people and they cannot be blamed. When an old man chooses to marry a young girl, the girl should realise that she is destroying another woman's life," she said. Parliamentarians who attended the study circle included Dr Fauzia Hameed from MQM, Asia Naz

Tanoli from PML-N, Mussarat Rafique from PPPP, Dr Shazia Sobia from PPPP, Suraiya Jatui from PPPP, Shahida Rehmani from PPPP, Shakila Luqman Chaudhry from PML-N, Shazia Ashfaq from PML-N, Naseema Hafeez Panezai from PMAP, Munazzia Hasan from PTI, and former MNA and member Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Dr Samia Raheel Qazi.

The theme for study circle was 'Significance of 16 Days of Activism and Role of Parliamentarians in Elimination of Violence against Women'. The study circle was intended to highlight the systemic nature of gender based violence that encourages inequality and discrimination and how women parliamentarians can play an effective role in its elimination.

Director Coordination and Resource Mobilization, Aurat Foundation Professor Farkhanda Aurangzeb spoke on the significance of '16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence,' tracing its historical perspective and relating to our

own social systems related to attitudes of violence prevalent nationally and globally.

Joint Secretary, Project Management Unit (PMU), National Assembly, Syed Shamoon Hashmi talked about how social attitudes and domestic environment contribute in violence against women and its prevalence Pakistan.

Chairperson Women Organization for Rights and Democracy Aqsa Khan presented the resolution at a press conference on behalf of EVAWG Alliance. She said that EVAW members note with concern that the existing gender equality disparities have worsened due to the current social, economic, political issues and lack of proactive will to deal with Violence against women and girls issues.

She said that though the domestic violence legislation has been passed in three provinces, the implementation mechanism needs to be strengthened. The resolution presented on this occasion demanded the govern-