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Violence against women in private domain

Speakers decry absence of law to curb crime

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD - Speaking at different events organised to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the launch of 16 Days of Activism on Violence against Women, the activists and non-governmental organisations said most of the violence against women takes place in the private domain and there is no law that allows state to take action against this kind of crime.

The International Day on Violence against Women was first declared on 1981 by the first Feminist Congress of Latin America and the Caribbean to commemorate the violent assassination of Mirabal sisters on November 25 in 1960 in Dominican Republic. In 1999, the General Assembly designated November 25 as the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to direct the world's attention to the urgent priority of ending the pandemic of VAW which devastates lives, fractures communities and stalls development.

The 16 Days of Activism were started with the launched of different events including one million signature campaign titled "Take Action Now!!! Break the Silence to End the Violence against Women and Girls." The campaign is an initiative of Ending Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Alliance and the Ministry of Human Rights.

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Human Rights Mustafa Nawaz Khokher launched the campaign in an event that features mime presentation, song launch besides motivating speeches. The campaign is

aimed at raising voice about the pending legislations including Domestic Violence and Acid Crime and Prevention Bill and issues related to women and girls in crisis, strengthening local work around VAW, establish link between local and international work and demonstrating solidarity with victims.

Speaking on this occasion, Mustafa Nawaz Khokher said Pakistan is a signatory of numerous international treaties and covenants and implementing these international commitments through national legislation is the state's prime responsibility.

He said he belongs to a rural background and has witnessed and heard about dreadful incidents of VAW. "It is unfortunate that we as a nation are not able to provide proper legislative mechanism to stop this injustice." He said that the campaign should not end in 16 days but should continue 365 days of the year.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator Timo Pakkala highlighted the UN's efforts on gender equality and women empowerment. "Significant effort has been made in past to control VAW in Pakistan but still a lot needs to be done," he said.

Senator Nilofer Bukhtiar said after the devolution of Ministry of Women Development, no national agenda for women is owned by the state. She urged the government to establish a body at federal level that can act as a watchdog on implementation of women related legislation.

Country Representative for UN Women Alice Shackelford stressed the need to criminalize domestic violence. She said that VAW is not a private act as

it eventually affects the economy and development of the country.

Another important event organized to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was the 'Aurat Yakjehti Mela' organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Aurat Foundation.

The 'mela' is one in a series of events that are being organized by local organizations and the international community across Pakistan and around the world as part of the annual international campaign titled 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence. The campaign begins on November 25, International Day against Violence against Women, and ends on December 10, International Human Rights Day, to symbolically link violence against women and human rights.

"I would like to call upon all of us today to redress the status of women and girls that renders them undervalued and vulnerable," said Dr. Andrew Sisson, Director of USAID Mission in Pakistan addressing participants of the event. "We all, men and women, need to take an active role in addressing and preventing violence, changing gender attitudes, and increasing the commitment by community and government leaders on the issue."

Anis Haroon, the chairperson of National Commission for the Status of Women (NCSW), highlighted the need to challenge militarism and end violence against women by bringing together women's, peace, and human rights movements. She said that peace in home means peace in the society.



ISLAMABAD: A lady displaying handicrafts during a function jointly arranged by US Embassy and Aurat Foundation at Lok Virsa to mark the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women.--APP