

Wednesday, August 17, 2011

'Tip of the iceberg'

Reported cases of violence against women show a marked rise

Speakers blame lack of legislation; urge for uniformity in domestic violence bill

SEHRISH WASIF
ISLAMABAD

The number cases of violence against women (VAW) reported in the first six months of 2011 was significantly higher than 2010.

A total of 4,448 cases of VAW were reported during the first six months of 2011; 3,107 from Punjab, 819 from Sindh, 389 from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and 133 from Balochistan. During the same period in 2010, 4,061 cases of VAW were reported across the country.

This was revealed at a press conference on "Biannual

Statistics of VAW", organised by Aurat Foundation at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Aliya Mirza, Member of VAW Watch Committee, said that Punjab had the highest number of reported cases of abduction/kidnapping of women, amounting to 986; where Sindh, K-P and Balochistan had 160, 179 and 40 cases reported respectively.

She said that excluding honour crimes, women were murdered for reasons such as property dispute and men opting for multiple marriages (799 women). In addition, 396 cases of rape/gang rape of women have also been reported.

Mirza said that during the first six months of 2011, a total of 402 suicide cases of young women have been reported, "which is alarming as it in-

Majority of cases of VAW remain unrecorded due to the so-called tradition of keeping family's respect unbroken

Member of VAW Watch Committee **Aliya Mirza**

dicates a violent environment for women in the country".

"However it is believed that these statistics are the tip of the iceberg as majority of cases of violence against women remain unrecorded due to social and traditional norms, lack of access to reporting system and the so-called tradition of 'keeping family's respect unbroken,'" said Mirza.

She said in larger cities cases

of domestic violence against women are reported more due to awareness among people. However, the reason behind the surge in such cases is that domestic violence is still disregarded as a crime.

Other speakers expressed concern over the staggering 72 cases of VAW cases reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) alone. The figure included 15 cases of murder, 12 of abduction/kidnapping, nine of domestic violence, three of suicide, three of rape/gang rape, three of sexual assault, two of acid throwing, among others.

They said that the authorities need to pay attention to the situation, "because if we aim to end violence and crime in our society, we will first have to establish an ideal

HOSTILITY

4,448

cases of violence against women were reported in the first half of 2011; 4,061 such cases were reported during the same period in 2010

situation in ICT".

They blamed the lack of legislation as one of the main reasons behind the increase in cases of violence against women, and urged for uniformity in the domestic violence bill and the creation of a witness protection law/system in the country.

VAW Watch Committee

Member Samar Minallah said that if there are more provinces in the country, it will be easier to highlight and address such cases as each region is unique in its ways of inflicting violence on women. "If we learn the diversity of the ways how violence is inflicted on women in different regions, that might help us address the issue culturally," she said.

"We want all provinces to have uniformity in the domestic violence bill," said Minallah, adding that the domestic violence bill will be soon tabled before K-P and Sindh provincial assemblies.

She blamed the lack of legislation as one of the main reasons behind the increase in cases of VAW and urged to have a witness protection law/system in the country.