

**Violence** against women

# Laws can't protect women from outdated traditions

Sociopolitical system, patriarchal society, absence of political will cited as major factors



**OUR CORRESPONDENT**  
ISLAMABAD

Despite the enactment of laws, violence against women (VAW) is on the rise, according to a report prepared by a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The outdated socio-economic system, inhuman tribal and feudal traditions, and non-implementation of laws are some of the factors that are contributing to the rise in crimes against women, said eminent rights activists at the launch of the report on Monday.

Former member of National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Nasreen Azhar presented the findings of the report, titled "Situation of Violence against Women in Pakistan," compiled by Aurat Foundation.

The trend is aggravating in some areas, such as in Balochistan, where in most cases of siah kari (honour killing), the women were killed on the jirga's orders but the

men survived after paying compensation. Activists called for a change in the mindset and stringent measures to curb the menace.

The chief guest, former NCSW chairperson Justice (ret'd) Majida Rizvi, gave a critical analysis of VAW, citing women's dependence on men, and men's perception of women as their property as major factors.

"Most of the laws enacted in the name of Islam, such as the Hudood ordinances, by military dictator Ziaul Haq, are discriminatory towards women," Rizvi added. She also criticised the police who have not been sensitized towards such crimes.

The former judge said jirgas are playing havoc with people's lives, particularly so in the case of women. She quoted the recent incident in Kohistan which sent shockwaves across the country as an example and demanded a ban on jirgas.

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"The report is just a tip of the iceberg as the data collected is based on cases reported in the media," said Anis Haroon, former NCSW chairperson. "Violence against women is endemic as there is no system of addressing it, nor are the laws implemented." She also criticised tribal culture which has little space for women.

Human Rights Secretary Shaigan Malik, in his concluding remarks, agreed that only 40% cases of VAW are registered with the police. In almost 89% cases, the criminals are acquitted.

The reports shows that 8,539 women became victims of vio-

lence in 2011, as compared to 8,000 cases reported in 2010, showing a 6.74% increase. The fact that the figures do not exhibit a radical change indicates that neither state nor society is attempting to curb uncivilised behaviour. In some forms of violence there has been a notable increase, for instance, sexual assault by 48.65%, acid throwing by 37.5%, 'honour' killings by 26.57%, while domestic violence increased by 25.51%.

**Islamabad**

There were a total of 148 incidents of violence reported in Islamabad during 2011, including 34 cases of murder, 27 cases of abduction, 21 cases of domestic violence, eight rape incidents, five sexual assault cases, nine suicide cases and two acid throwing incidents.

**Punjab**

The report shows that 6,188 VAW incidents occurred in 36 districts of Punjab, from

**CONVICTION RATE**

**89%**

cases are disposed of with the acquittal of criminals

January to December 2011. There were 1,846 cases of abduction, 897 murder cases, 348 domestic violence incidents, 322 'honour' killing cases, 734 rape and 64 sexual assault cases, 533 suicide, 32 acid-throwing and 28 stove-burning incidents.

**Sindh**

A total of 1,316 incidents of VAW were recorded in 23 districts of Sindh. There were 266 cases of 'honour' killing, 255 murder cases, 152 abduction cases, 117 suicide cases, 68 rape and 41 sexual assault cases, 137 domestic violence cases and six acid-throwing

cases.

**Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa**

A total of 694 incidents of VAW occurred in 26 districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. There were 341 cases of murder, 83 suicide incidents, 104 domestic violence cases, 47 abduction cases and 30 'honour' killing cases and seven rape cases.

**Balochistan**

The study has shown that a total of 193 incidents occurred in 28 districts of Balochistan in 2011. There were 86 cases of 'honour' killing, 48 murder cases, 10 rape cases, 16 suicide incidents and four acid-throwing incidents.

The report shows that FIRs were not registered in a significant number of incidents. Out of a total of 8,539 incidents, FIRs were registered in 6,745 cases. No FIR was registered in 911 cases, while no information was available in 883 cases.