

8,539 women became victims of violence in 2011

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Islamabad

The annual report on violence against women (VAW) launched on Monday shows increasing trend of VAW in the country with married women becoming the victim in majority of the cases.

The report titled 'Situation of Violence against Women in Pakistan 2011' is fourth such report issued by the Aurat Foundation compiling annual statistics of violence against women in the country. The comprehensive report presents analysis of such crimes and explains the mindset that leads to these extreme steps.

Nasreen Azhar, women's rights activist and former member National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), pre-

sented the findings of the report. She said that 8,539 women became victims of violence in 2011 and there was an overall 6.74 per cent increase in reported cases of VAW in the country as compared to year 2010. The figure was 8,000 in year 2010. She said that in 42.78 per cent cases, the victims were married women whereas almost 39 per cent were unmarried and 1.46 per cent were widows or divorced.

Pointing out another alarming trend, Nasreen said around 15 per cent of victims were less than 18 years of age. She said that in large number of incidents, the FIRs were not lodged. Among the total 8,539 incidents, FIR was registered in 6,745 cases whereas no FIR was registered in 911 cases and there was no information available in

888 cases. In some forms of violence there has been notable increase, for instance, sexual assault increased by 48.65 per cent, acid throwing increased by 37.5 per cent, 'honour' killings by 26.57 per cent, and domestic violence increased by 25.51 per cent.

She said that majority of the cases were reported from Punjab where 6,188 violence incidents were reported and largest number of abduction cases were reported in Punjab. She informed that in Sindh, most perpetrated crime against women was honour killing and murder of women topped the list of violence incidents reported in KP.

The former Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women, Anis Haroon, termed the current data as tip of

iceberg and said that the real rate of violence against women could be much higher. "Although the violence against women also happens in modern developed countries, however, in Pakistan this violence is more problematic because of lack of implementation of laws, bad governance, lack of awareness and education.

She emphasised that for eradicating violence against women, there is a need to change the mindset of society. She also criticised the negative aspects of tribal culture, which has little space for women and where women are killed in the name of 'honour' and are given away in dispute settlement. Justice (r) Majida Rizvie, former Chairperson of National Commission on the Status of Women

(NCSW), and chief guest of the launching ceremony, in her concluding speech gave a critical analysis of violence against women in Pakistan. She said that there are many causes behind violence against women, but the root cause is perhaps women's dependence on men, and men's approach that women are their property.

She said the current socio-political and economic situation is one of the main factors behind increasing violence against women. She said most of the laws enacted in the name of Islam were actually formulated in a way that they actually became against the spirit of Islam and were discriminatory towards women. She also criticised the law enforcing agencies that are less sensitised towards crimes against women.

Secretary Ministry of Human Rights Shaigan Shareef Malik in his concluding remarks said that only 60 per cent of such cases are reported and of those reported cases only 40 per cent are registered with police. He said that in almost 89 per cent cases the criminals are acquitted.