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LHC honour killing

Activists demand justice for slain woman

Protest for federal, provincial governments to take action against killers

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The brutal murder of a pregnant 25 year-old woman by her family at the Lahore High Court on Tuesday infuriated civil society members, who assembled near the National Press Club and began chanting slogans against the federal and provincial governments.

They were demanding the federal and provincial governments arrest the victim's family members who were responsible for her death.

The victim, Farzana, had married a man of her own free will and had come to court to record her statement in a case registered by her family claiming her husband had kidnapped her. Her relatives used the opportunity to 'stone' her to death using bricks. The mob of around two dozen family members included her brothers and father.

Civil society raised concerns over the negligence of the administration, police officials on the scene and bystanders who witnessed the murder at the LHC. Police officials



ANGUISH: Activists of civil society hold a protest demonstration in Islamabad on Thursday against murder of a married women in Lahore. PHOTO: ONLINE

deputed at the courts were curiously missing and hundreds of lawyers stood numb watching, they said.

In an email circulated after the incident, rights activist Tahira Abdullah asked, "Where are we headed? Or have we arrived? Has anything changed since the milestones of 1973, 1981, 1994 or 2010 for Pakistani women and girls suffering under vile misogyny and stifling patriarchy?"

Political activist Sarwar Bari underscored the seriousness of the incident. "A citizen can be killed within the boundaries of the Lahore High Court.

Nobody tried to protect her.

They also criticized the Honour Killing Act, 2004, saying it fails to provide justice to victims and punishment to the perpetrators. According to a statement issued by Aurat Foundation, the act renders honour killings compoundable offences, thus allowing out-of-court settlements and pardons.

The alarming trend of giving social sanction to this kind of offense is one of the main reasons affecting the implementation of the law.

Most honour killings are not reported in police stations, and of those registered, 77% of the

perpetrators have been acquitted by courts, the statement said.

Rights activist Farzana Bari highlighted the importance of social media in creating awareness. "According to my observation, 90% of people participating in the protest today were young people who learnt of the issue through social media," she said.

Bari said NGOs' role is to create space for dialogue but they are now too busy with their projects and. "It is the general public who stepped out today, assuring that there is still some hope," she said.