

Laws fail to stop violence against women: Speakers

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During the last few years, many significant laws have been passed by the parliament in the country; however, these could not be implemented effectively. Civil society and women's rights activists expected notable change in the situation of women in Pakistan. The facts are other way round. Thousands of women are still tortured or face one or another kind of violence.

These views were expressed by Rabeea Hadi, Director Advocacy, Aurat Foundation, during a public solidarity event titled 'Apno Ki Yaad' on International Human Rights Day on Wednesday.

Giving a situation analysis of violence against women in Pakistan she said that during the nine months period i.e. January-September 2014, 1543 cases of kidnapping / abducting women were reported i.e. 4 women per day; 1256 women were murdered i.e. 3 women per day; 1149 women were raped and gang-raped i.e. 3 women per day which shows 17 per cent increase compared to last year; 708 women committed suicide at the rate of 2 women per day; 604 women were killed in the name of 'honour' i.e. 2 women per day; and 392 cases of domestic violence were reported during the period i.e. one case per day.

Similarly, despite the passage of The Criminal Law (Third Amendment) Act, 2011 (the laws which deal with the anti-women customary practices like wanni, swara etc), forced marriages and child marriages still being made e.g. during the nine month period 22 cases of forced marriages and 7 cases of child marriage were reported. Thus, a total of 7450 of violence against women were reported during the nine months i.e. January to September, 2014, sufficient to realise the increase in violence against women in Pakistan.

Asyia Nasir, Member National Assembly, JUI-F, during her address to the public rally, condemned the forced conversions of minority women and girls and their forced marriage to Muslims. She said that 'women's rights' should be valued, respected and implemented as 'human rights'. In order to end domestic violence from each and every home, "we need an effective legislation on domestic violence. And each religion honours and respects women's rights". She said that for effective implementation of

women friendly laws, the government, law enforcement agencies, human rights organisation and civil society organisations must work hand-in-hand. A young girl with disabilities, during her address, demanded that the rights of persons with disabilities should also be considered as human rights.

At the end of the public event, the participants passed resolutions for ending violence against women. Akram Khurshid, National Programme Manager, AAWAZ Programme, SPO, read the resolutions for the participants and get those passed. The major resolutions included: effective legislation and its implementation for ending violence against women and children; domestic violence to be declared as crime; law on marrying little girls be amended and 18 years be declared as the marriage age at the least; the law dealing with the anti-women customary practices like wanni, swara etc be implemented effectively and jurisdiction of the law should be extended to regions like Gilgit-Baltistan, FATA and PATA; institutions and organisations supporting the violence-affected-women need to be strengthened further, so that women can get medico-legal support through one-window operation.

Renown poet Ms Kishwar Naheed and Ms Alya Mirza read their poems on ending violence against women and girls. A signature campaign was also launched during the event demanding ending violence and bringing important legislation and ensuring effective implementation of such laws.

CELEBRATING MALALA NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

In a separate event, Aurat Foundation in collaboration with Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalist (RIUJ) organised a live screening of the award ceremony of Malala getting the Nobel Peace Prize. The participants appreciated Malala's struggle for girls' education and her courage to stand against all odds in this struggle. The public event, rally and Malala's award taking ceremony were organised by the consortium partners of AAWAZ Programme - a five-year programme to strengthen democratic processes in Pakistan by making it more open, inclusive and accountable to citizens. It is funded by DFID and managed by DAI. The programme is being implemented in 45 districts across Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces by Aurat Foundation, SAP-Pk, SPO and Sungi Development Foundation.