

Voilence against women in pakistan

Sociology, Violence



Forms of Violence Against Women in Pakistan Domestic Violence and Rape

After giving birth to five girls and being continuously tortured by her husband for not conceiving a boy, Faizan Mai, a distraught thirty-five year old Pakistani woman, killed herself and her two youngest daughters in 2002 by jumping in front of a moving train when her husband declared he would marry another woman that could give him a son. Studies on violence against women estimate that a woman in Pakistan is raped every two hours; approximately 70-90 percent of women suffer from some form of domestic violence; and there were at least 3, 296 cases of violence against women in 2002. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) documented 895 cases of abuse against women for the first part of 2003, consisting of 260 murders and 124 cases of gang rape. Barriers such as social stigma, legislation that punishes victims, economic dependency, and lack of access to information about their rights prevent women and girls from reporting domestic violence and rape. Nearly 50 percent of women who do report rape are jailed under the Hudood Ordinances, which criminalizes extramarital sexual relations, including rape. The Hudood Ordinances, implemented in 1979, abolished recognition and punishment for marital rape. Pakistan has no specific legislation against domestic violence and police are reluctant to get involved in "family matters." HRW's 1999 *Crime or Custom?* documents the lack of response and hostility women victims of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence face due to rampant incompetence, corruption, and biases against women throughout the criminal justice system. Honor Killings Also commonly referred to as "karo kuri" or "tur," honor killings are a custom where male relatives kill sisters, daughters, or other female family members

to avenge the shame she is accused of bringing to the family. Usually there is only an allegation that a woman had an illicit sexual affair and the woman is never given a chance to offer her side of the story. For instance, in January 2002, Jehahgiran, a domestic worker, was killed by her brother when he suspected her of having an illicit affair. Often jirgas, or tribal councils sanction these murders. Honor killings are equivalent to murder under the Pakistan Penal Code, but under the law, the family of the victim can compromise with the murderer. Therefore, a person who alleges that he killed in the name of honor may not be penalized if the family agrees to let him go. HRCP reported there were more than 450 honor killings in Pakistan in 2002 and forty-two new cases in the province of Punjab between January and April of 2003. Kamila Hyat of HRCP said, " one of the main reasons why honor killings are increasing is because people are getting away with it, and there is poor prosecutions. Only 20 percent of cases are brought to justice." Acid Throwing Sakina, twenty-two years old, and her fifteen-year-old sister, Shahina, were scarred for life after Sakina's husband, Zahid Nawaz, poured acid over them after an argument over his gambling and drinking habits. 70 percent of Sakina's body was burned, while Shahina was hit in the face and blinded. Police have made no attempt to arrest Nawaz, and the sisters live in fear of another attack. Nearly 280 women were killed and 750 were injured in 2002 from acid attacks. Acid burns rarely kill but result in serious disfigurement and suffering which confine women to their homes leading to social isolation and depression. Although women have protested the open sale of acid, it is still easily available. Burn Victims Raqia Glum turned to her father-in-law when her husband beat her, but he instead ordered that she be

burned after her husband accused her of stealing less than \$35 from his wallet. Her husband and brother-in-law doused her in oil and lit a match. When police came to investigate, Raqia's brother told them it was a suicide attempt and no charges were made. 95 percent of her body was burned and she had little hope of survival in a hospital ill-equipped for burn victims. After nineteen days of agony she passed away and her children were sent to live with her mother-in-law. Raqia's family has been unable to see them since their mother's funeral. Up to three women a day die from "stove deaths" in Pakistan, usually after a history of abuse for such reasons as the failure to give birth to a son, disobedience, and allegations of adultery. Families and the police often label these murders as "accidents" that occur while cooking, when in fact these women are intentionally doused with kerosene and lit on fire. In the past eight years in Islamabad alone, four thousand women were set on fire by their family members, and less than 4 percent survived. The majority of the victims were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, and approximately 30 percent were pregnant. Currently, there are no burns centers in Pakistan even though the establishment of such a unit could mean the difference between life and death for hundreds of women. Police are often reluctant to investigate these "family matters" and when cases are investigated, husbands can often bribe the police to label them as suicide attempts. Many women don't survive by the time their case goes to trial and their cases are dropped. Only 5 percent of abusive husbands and family members are ever convicted. Child marriage is a practice in which the parents of two small children (even infants) arrange a future marriage. The children are betrothed or promised to each other. Often the two children

never even meet each other until the wedding ceremony, when they are both of an acceptable marriageable age -- which age differs based upon custom. In some cultures, the age is at or even before the onset of puberty. Child marriage has been practiced in many cultures for centuries. It continues to this day, although it has extremely few advocates. The practice has been popular in India and Sub-Saharan Africa. It was also common among the nobility of some countries, with betrothal being used to secure political alliances in much the same way that marriage was. In some cultures, arranged marriages are common. What differs here is the age at which the arrangement is made. The rationale behind this practice is that a child's parents can arrange a sensible match with the parents of a child from a suitable family, thus securing the child's future at a young age. Many people who have been married in this way do grow to love and cherish their spouses after the marriage. It is thought by adherents that physical attraction is not a suitable foundation upon which to build a marriage and a family. A separate consideration is the age at which the wedding, as opposed to the engagement, takes place. Families are able to cement political and/or financial ties by having children intermarry. The betrothal is considered a binding contract upon the families and the children. The breaking of a betrothal can have serious consequences for both the families and the children themselves. The practice of child marriage has continued to fall further and further out of favor in modern times; however, it is still practiced by some sub-cultures Vani (Urdu: وانی) is a child marriage custom in tribal areas of Pakistan. Besides tribal areas, it is widely followed in Punjab in Pakistan. This custom is tied to blood feuds among the different tribes and

clans where the young girls are forcibly married to the members of different clans in order to resolve the feuds. The Vani could be avoided if the clan of the girl agrees to pay money, called Deet (Urdu: ڈیٹ), to avoid Vani. The young bride may spend her life paying for the "crime" of her male relatives.

Fake honor killings In honor killings, if only the Kari is killed and the karo escapes, as is often the case, the karo has to compensate the affected man -- for the damage to honor he inflicted, for the woman's worth who was killed and to have his own life spared. Killings in the name of honor

Often, honor killings are carried out on the flimsiest of grounds, such as by a man who said he had dreamt that his wife had betrayed him. State institutions -- the law enforcement apparatus and the judiciary -- deal with these crimes against women with extraordinary leniency and the law provides many loopholes for murderers in the name of honor to kill without punishment. As a result, the tradition remains unbroken. The methods of honor killings vary.

In Sindh, a Kari (literally a 'black woman') and a kayo ('a black man') are hacked to pieces by axe and hatchets, often with the complicity of the community. In Punjab, the killings, usually by shooting, are more often based on individual decisions and carried out in private. In most cases, husbands, fathers or brothers of the woman concerned commit the killings. In some cases, jirgas (tribal councils) decide that the woman should be killed and send men to carry out the deed. The victims range from pre-pubescent girls to grandmothers. They are usually killed on the mere allegation of having entered 'illicit' sexual relationships. They are never given an opportunity to give their version of the allegation as there is no point in doing so -- the allegation alone is enough to defile a man's honor and therefore enough to

justify the killing of the woman. According to the non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 286 women were reported to have been killed for reasons of honor in 1998 in the Punjab alone. The Special Task Force for Sindh of the HRCP received reports of 196 cases of karo-kari killings in Sindh in 1998, involving 255 deaths. The real number of such killings is vastly greater than those reported. Pakistani women abroad do not escape the threat of honor killings. The Nottingham crown court in the United Kingdom in May 1999 sentenced a Pakistani woman and her grown-up son to life imprisonment for murdering the woman's daughter, Rukhsana Naz, a pregnant mother of two children. Rukhsana was perceived to have brought shame on the family by having a sexual relationship outside marriage. Her brother reportedly strangled Rukhsana, while her mother held her down. Two main factors contribute to violence against women: women's commodification and conceptions of honor. The concept of women as a commodity, not human beings endowed with dignity and rights equal to those of men, is deeply rooted in tribal culture