

## Maltreatment with Women and Girls in Pakistan

Ms. Jawaria KASHIF (Pakistan)

Pakistani women and girls are treated inhumanely. Rapes, acid attacks, domestic violence, sexual harassment, workplace harassment, insecurity in public places, forced marriages, murders/assassinations under the pretext of honor killing and many other crimes against women are still happening in Pakistan.

In Pakistan girls are not permitted to marry a man of their choice, and if a girl does so, she becomes the reason of bringing dishonor to the family. The family members of the girl then kill her with their mutual consent in the name of honor or burn her alive. Panchayat or Jirga (a traditional assembly of elders) orders the murder/killing of the girl. [Sana Cheema](#)'s case is the most recent example of honor killing in Pakistan.

Many women and girls are facing the problem of domestic violence in Pakistan. Women and girls remain silent in cases of domestic violence because they are inculcated an idea while being brought up that it's okay to be abused by their male family members, and hence it goes unnoticed. Family honor is considered more important than a girl's happiness. Women/girls have a duty to keep quiet even if they suffer any kind of abuse from their family members, especially their husbands. A mere 0.4% of women bring their cases of domestic violence to courts. There are numerous reasons behind the silence of women. They are financially dependent on male family members. They are unaware of their fundamental as well as legal rights. They also feel huge pressure due to matrimonial relations, and have fear of societal reactions. According to the survey by [Gallup Pakistan](#) in 2016, 65% of Pakistanis believe that domestic violence is a family's personal problem. Only 35% said that media and social organizations should play a role to end domestic violence.

In Pakistan, women and girls are harassed at workplaces as well as in public spaces. When they are harassed at their workplaces, most of them don't complain about it to save their respect and honor. Secondly, there is no strong legislation enacted in Pakistan to prove their cases of harassment. The laws which are available to deal with the cases of harassment are not sufficient. Even if a woman files a case of harassment, it is not certain whether she will obtain justice. The harassers get benefit of it. [Meesha Shafi](#)'s case is the recent example of it.

Women and girls feel insecure about themselves in public spaces, and therefore cannot move freely. They are harassed at public bus stops while travelling alone. About 82% of women commuters have faced [harassment](#) at public bus stops in Lahore, Pakistan.

Even little girls cannot go alone to play in nearby parks, nor can they go alone to nearby tuck-shops, etc. If a girl goes alone, she could be kidnapped, raped and murdered brutally. [Zainab Ansari](#)'s case is one of the examples.

[Laws](#) for the protection of women exist in Pakistan, but the main problem is the Pakistani legal system. There are still many loopholes in the legal machinery, and that is why the laws remain poorly enforced in Pakistan.

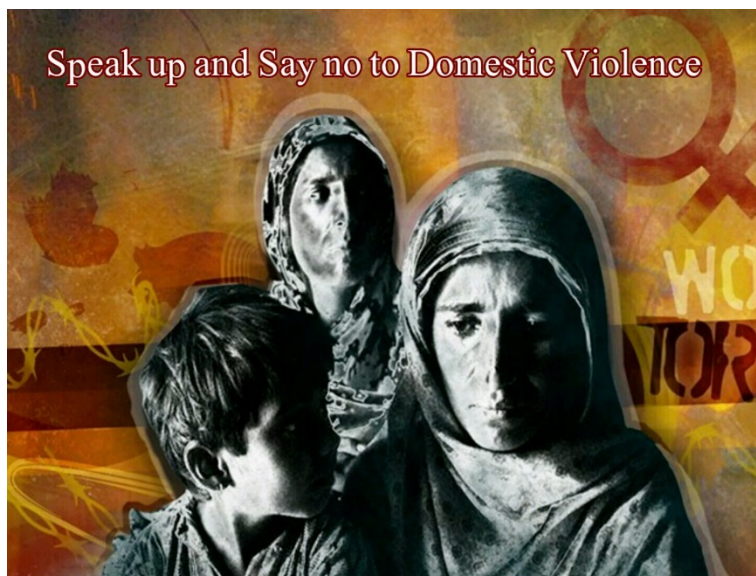
Pakistani society is patriarchal, which promotes gender inequality as a norm. Our society is multifaceted with several racial groups, but when the question of gender equality is raised, all groups, classes and sects are united on the point of men's superiority. Even if a husband is jobless and a wife is the sole bread winner, the husband still has the authority to beat his wife without any reason. Likewise, the father or the elder brother

## The 28<sup>th</sup> Foreign Correspondent Report

tortures his daughter or sister only to remind them that they are the heads of the household. The structure of the society, where men are taught that they are superior, gives more power to men.

Gender inequality is the root cause of the violence against women in Pakistan. Awareness must be raised among masses to promote gender equality so that men and women can make free choices without limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.

To end gender discrimination and violence against women in Pakistan, the state, civil society and the private sector must work collectively. The government must put the legal machinery in action so that women and girls can have access to justice.



The 28<sup>th</sup> Foreign Correspondent Report



<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/pakistan>  
<https://asiancorrespondent.com/2018/03/ending-violence-against-women-in-pakistan/#rKJgcBKi8jcsL5bX.97>