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Pakistan: Another young woman killed by her family for marrying without their consent - Stoned just a few yards from the Lahore High Court

Thursday 29 May 2014, by [AHRC](#), [HRCP](#), [PILLAY Navi](#), [YUSUF Zohra](#) (Date first published: 28 May 2014).

Press release

HRCP appalled by woman's murder outside LHC

Lahore, May 28: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed serious alarm and disgust over the murder of a young woman, who was killed by her family in a manner like stoning to death, close to the Lahore High Court for marrying without their consent.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Commission said: "HRCP is appalled by the manner of Farzana Parveen's death just a few yards from the Lahore High Court on Tuesday. Her only crime was to marry of her own free will, a right that the law recognises for all adult citizens but one where the state has failed to prevent abuse and violence.

Parveen was killed by around two dozen relatives, including her father and brothers, who attacked her and her husband with batons and bricks. Neither the crowd of onlookers nor policemen present near the place and in the high court intervened.

The woman had come to the court to record her statement in a case lodged after she had married without her family's approval. The family had reportedly threatened Parveen and her husband on the last hearing on May 12.

Parveen's murder was no case of sudden provocation as several months had passed after her marriage. The family had obviously come prepared to commit murder. Parveen's father had no remorse when he surrendered to the police and called the cold-blooded murder an "honour killing". He stated that he did not regret his actions.

Such brazen actions have been encouraged by the authorities' failure to fulfil their duty to protect citizens' lives. The sheer number of women falling victim to the so-called "honour killings" is enough to dispel all illusions about any interest in saving their lives. In 2013 alone, HRCP recorded the killing of nearly 900 women in "honour" crimes from media reports. These women were killed because the state did not confront this feudal practice supported by religiosity and bigotry.

HRCP calls upon the government to unreservedly condemn this shameful crime and make sure that Parveen's killers do not escape justice by glorifying their dastardly act in the name of honour. The government should also consider starting a public awareness campaign to combat the feudal mentality behind the crime and ensure that the killers get no premium for invoking misplaced notions of honour.

Zohra Yusuf

Chairperson

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay urges Government action after “honour” killing of pregnant woman in Pakistan

GENEVA (28 May 2014) - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on Wednesday strongly condemned the killing of a 25-year-old pregnant woman, stoned to death by her family as she approached a Pakistani court on Tuesday, and urged the Government of Pakistan to do much more to prevent such killings.

“I am deeply shocked by the death of Farzana Parveen, who, as in the case of so many other women in Pakistan, was brutally murdered by members of her own family simply because she married a man of her own choice,” Pillay said. “I do not even wish to use the phrase ‘honour killing’: there is not the faintest vestige of honour in killing a woman in this way.”

According to reports, some 20 members of Ms. Parveen’s family, including her father and two brothers, attacked her and her husband when they were on their way to the Lahore High Court, where they were due to contest her father’s allegations that she had been kidnapped by her husband and that their marriage was invalid.

“Every year, hundreds of women are killed in Pakistan as a punishment for marrying a man their families have not chosen or for refusing an arranged marriage,” Pillay said. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 869 women were murdered in so-called ‘honour killings’ in the country last year, but the real figure could be much higher, with many such killings believed to be disguised as accidents, or not reported at all.

“The Pakistani Government must take urgent and strong measures to put an end to the continuous stream of so-called ‘honour killings’ and other forms of violence against women,” the High Commissioner said. “They must also make a much greater effort to protect women like Farzana Parveen. The fact that she was killed on her way to court, shows a serious failure by the State to provide security for someone who - given how common such killings are in Pakistan — was obviously at risk.”

“People who carry out ‘honour crimes’ are rarely prosecuted, and even when they are, they often receive absurdly light sentences, considering they have committed pre-meditated murder,” Pillay said. “This is unacceptable, and it is clearly both the State’s and the judiciary’s responsibility to work seriously to deter such crimes, and ensure that people who commit them are brought to justice.”

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which reviewed Pakistan’s record on women’s rights last year, expressed concern that despite the amended Criminal Law Act of 2004, which criminalizes offenses in the name of so-called honour, two Ordinances known as the Qisas and Diyat Ordinances continue to be applied in these cases. As a result, perpetrators are often given legal concessions, light sentences or are pardoned altogether.

The UN Committee called on Pakistan to address shortcomings in the criminal law and to repeal all

provisions under which perpetrators of so-called honour crimes are allowed to negotiate pardon with the victim's families. "Such provisions are particularly pernicious when members of the same family that conducted the killing are given the right to pardon the killers," Pillay said.

The UN General Assembly, in three separate resolutions in 2001, 2003 and 2005, called on Member States to intensify legislative, educational, social and other efforts to prevent and eliminate "honour"-based crimes, and to investigate promptly and thoroughly, prosecute effectively, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Pakistan has one of the highest rates of violence against women globally.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Statement by the Asian Human Rights Commission

WORLD: Government's failure leads to a pregnant woman being stoned to death

The world is once again shocked by the news of the stoning to death of a 25-year-old pregnant woman, Farzana Parveen Iqbal, in Pakistan. The stoning took place before the Lahore High Court where she had attended due to a summons. The stoning was carried out by 20 members of her own family including her father and two brothers.

The reason for the stoning was that Farzana had married a person of her own choice and she was pregnant with a child from that marriage. Her family did not approve the marriage and was forcing her to marry another person of their choice who happened to be her cousin. The father who was aware of Farzana's marriage filed a false complaint of abduction against her husband. The police filed charges on the basis of the father's complaint. It appears that the filing of the complaint was done with the purpose of bringing her out from hiding with the intent to kill her.

It is evident that the police have been a part of this conspiracy as they should have investigated the complaint before filing such a charge. Bringing persons to court with the intent to kill them, particularly in cases relating to honour killings and blasphemy cases is a common practice in Pakistan and the police would have naturally been aware of the situation in this instance. It was when Farzana arrived at the court in order to present her case to the judge that she was already married that the brutal killing took place.

The culprits who took part in the stoning did so in broad daylight and in full view of crowd of people and then manage to escape as there was no attempt to stop or arrest them. As the incident took place before the High Court of Lahore the police would have been present in large numbers at the scene as they are always present when the High Court is in session. In fact, Mr. Iqbal, Farzana's husband told the BBC that the police stood by and did nothing to prevent the stoning. He stated, "We were shouting for help, nobody listened. One of my relatives took off his clothes to capture the attention of the police but they did not intervene. They watched Farzana being killed and did nothing".

No attempt whatsoever was made to protect the victim or to obstruct the perpetrators. Farzana's father later surrendered to the police but as is usual in such instances showed no regret no remorse

and admitted openly that he has done this murder.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), the number of women falling victim to the so-called "honour killings" is enough to dispel all illusions about any interest in saving their lives. In 2013 alone, the HRCP recorded the deaths of nearly 900 women in "honour" crimes from media reports. These women were killed because the state did not confront this feudal practice supported by religious fundamentalism and bigotry.

The Aurat Foundation, a NGO working on the rights of women, states around 1,000 Pakistani women are killed every year by their family members in honour killings. The true figure is probably many times higher since the Aurat Foundation only compiles figures from newspaper reports. The government does not compile national statistics.

In any case, the killing of persons who marry against the consent of the family, which is usually identified by the term 'honour killings' is a frequent and a common phenomenon in Pakistan. Furthermore, using a summons of a court as a subterfuge to bring persons out of hiding so that such killings can take place is also a frequent phenomenon. Such situations have arisen both in terms of honour killings and killings relating to allegations of blasphemy.

The most famous incident of protest against this whole manipulation of law in order to kill victims involved Bishop John Josephs, who as a symbolic act of protest shot himself to death.

Thus the government of Pakistan is fully aware of this horror that is being regularly perpetrated but has failed to take any meaningful action in order to bring this practice to an end.

The issue is not about arresting a few persons after the incident. The fundamental issue is the lack of a comprehensive plan on the part of the government of Pakistan to deal with the problem. As long as the government fails to develop a comprehensive plan and implement it, with the cooperation of the law enforcement agencies, honour killings will continue to take place in Pakistan.

The Asian Human Right Commission (AHRC) over a long period of time has consistently drawn the attention of the government of Pakistan about this practice and on every incident of this sort renewed calls to the government to give due consideration to this abominable practice. Similar calls have also been made to the government from the local sources as well as from the international community.

Following the killing of Farzana Parveen Iqbal the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, issued a comprehensive statement in which, among other things, she has stated that the Pakistani government must take urgent measures to put an end to the continuous stream of so called honour killings and other forms of violence against women. They must also make a much greater effort to protect women like Farzana. The fact that she was killed on her way to court, shows a serious failure by the state to provide security for someone who - given how common such killings are in Pakistan - was obviously at risk.

In 2004, former President Pervez Musharraf, defined honour killings as murder, and brought in a law to that effect. However, the eradication of such heinous criminal acts cannot be achieved only by public announcements or through the enactment of laws. Any genuine and effective action lies in the area of the implementation of the law.

It is in this area that the government of Pakistan has proven itself completely ineffective. The system of policing and law enforcement in Pakistan is a law unto itself and even the government is unable to move it even for the purpose of dealing with the worst of the crimes.

The failure of the government to carry out its responsibility lies in its unwillingness and incapacity to exercise control over the policing establishment. If the government proves powerless to move its police to implement the law, and in particular, to deal with the such heinous crimes then no one can feel safe within the territory of Pakistan.

The AHRC also wishes to highlight the need that greater pressure must be brought on the government by the international community to ensure that it takes suitable action to end the police neglect relating to honour killings and all other forms of violence against women. Mere ritual condemnation after honour killings take place is unlikely to bring about any improvement in the situation at present.

The international community including the UN agencies must engage with the government of Pakistan in order to come with an agreement on a practical scheme of action to deal with this situation once and for all. If no such serious attempt is made by the international community it will not convince the persons who are threatened with future attacks of this nature as well as the population of Pakistan which faced with a powerless situation in the face of such horrendous crimes. The failure of the law enforcement agencies to deal with such crimes will only increase the vulnerability of women in the country.

The AHRC calls upon the government of Pakistan not to let Farzana Iqbal's death be in vain. The people of Pakistan and people of goodwill throughout the world have a right to expect that the government will show its moral indignation and outrage against the horror perpetrated by way of honour killings and other severe violence against women and vulnerable groups.
