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## **Pakistan: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 26 May 2010**

### **Information about honour killings in Pakistan. Information about women's groups that support potential victims.**

A report in *The Lancet* states:

“A general rise of brutality in Pakistani society could also account for the rise in violence against women, says Rehman. The fundamentalist Taliban are spreading fast in northern and western parts of the country, with devastating effects on human rights. “The more people turn to fundamentalist religion, the worse it will be for women's rights”, Rehman says.

Disappointingly, the Pakistani state offers little justice for the victims of honour killings. Although a 2004 law provides protection against “offences committed in name or on the pretext of honour”, perpetrators are rarely punished. And if he is prosecuted at all, a man who kills for honour is likely to be given a shorter sentence than someone who kills for different reasons.” (The Lancet (6 June 2009) *Killed in the name of honour*, Kristin Elisabeth Solberg, Issue 373 Vol. 9679)

The report continues:

“The state also fails to protect women at risk. There are a few government-run shelters scattered around the country, but, according to human rights activists, these shelters resemble “mini-prisons” more than safe havens.

When The Lancet met Aisha in Islamabad, 10 days after she narrowly escaped her brother's violence, she stayed with leading women's rights activist Shahnaz Bukhari. ‘Unfortunately, in my country, there is no fall-back system for such a girl’, Bukhari says. ‘I don't want her to go home and risk being killed, but there is no place for her.’ Bukhari, who heads the NGO Progressive Women's Association, is now trying to open a shelter in Rawalpindi, Islamabad's twin city, with her own money.

There are other problems too. Life in Pakistan is not easy for an unmarried woman estranged from her family. Society views Aisha as a tainted woman and she has few job opportunities. She is also deeply scarred by her experiences. Bukhari, a clinical psychologist, says that the 30-year-old is traumatised and depressed and needs counselling before she can rebuild her life.

Fortunately, there are some success stories. At Dastak Charitable Trust, one of only a couple of NGO-run women's shelters in the country, women who have fled their families receive vocational training and are encouraged to find a way to support themselves. Shabana Rehmat, a 23-year-old from a village in Punjab,

has lived in this shelter in Lahore for 4 years, and is now completing her bachelor degree. She is no longer afraid of her family, who threatened to kill her when they found out about her secret engagement to a childhood friend. She escaped with her life; her fiancé was not so lucky.” (ibid)

A recent article in *The Independent* (London) states:

“THE WEDDING celebrations had just subsided when Muhammad Yousaf, his wife and daughter, all from Nelson in Lancashire, went to the dusty cemetery to remember the friends and family who had died since their last visit to Pakistan.

Although there had been talk of tensions with some relatives in the village because of the recent breakdown of their oldest son's arranged marriage to a cousin from the same rural community around Jaurah near Gujrat in Punjab province, the atmosphere was one of apparent joy at the recent nuptials of their younger son, Asad. They had even decided to stay on for a few days and enjoy a holiday.

But as they offered up their prayers for the recent dead, four men who followed them to the graveyard opened fire with automatic weapons.

Mr Yousaf, 50, his wife, Pervaiz Bibi, 46, and their 22-year-old daughter Tanya, a mother of two young children back in Britain, died instantly in the hail of bullets. Another woman who was a distant relative was killed in the attack. Police said two of the gunmen were cousins of the dead couple and that the family were victims of an apparent honour killing.

The eruption of such violence in a small village in Punjab has sent shockwaves through Britain's Pakistani communities. Many thousands of people left the area to work in the Lancashire textile mills in the 1950s and 1960s, and they retain close links with their home country.

While some said they had grown increasingly alarmed at the number of the province's young men openly carrying powerful assault rifles, there was astonishment that the simple breakdown of a marriage in an area considered relatively peaceful by Pakistan's turbulent standards could spark mass murder.

Tariq Abbas Qureshi, the district police officer confirmed the motive was revenge. ‘The son of the man killed is in a divorce dispute with the daughter of the people who killed the family,’ he said.” (The Independent [London] (22 May 2010) *British family shot dead at funeral 'were victims of an honour killing'; Pakistan shootings*)

An article in *The Post* published in February 2010 notes:

“Aurat Foundation, an NGO struggling for women rights, in its report regarding violence against women during the year 2009 claimed that there were reported 2655 incidents of violence against women occurred in the period July 1 to December 31, 2009. "Out of the total cases, there were 797 cases of abduction, 485 of murder, including 126 incidents of honour killing, 374 rape/gang rape, and

195 were of suicide, Domestic violence 122, attempted suicide 121, sexual assault 98, trafficking 28 and so on, the report said.” (The Post (1 February 2010) *Pakistan: 3,005 women victimised in Punjab in 6 months*)

Another article published by the *Pakistan Newswire* in May 2009 mentions data collected by the Aurat Foundation and states:

“Expressing grave concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, specially Sindh province, the Aurat Foundation provincial coordinators Hina Tabassum and Lala Hassan, said there was no respite in violence against women (VAW) in the Sindh, as some 110 women were murdered, 57 kidnapped, 20 raped, and 45 subjected to domestic violence in the province during the first three months of current year. [...]

Hina Tabassum said according to the data collected by the Aurat Foundation, a total number of 419 incidents of violence against women occurred in 23 districts of Sindh province, during the first three months (January-March) of the current year. She said 542 persons including 13 men were affected in these incidents. Giving the breakup of these 419 cases, she said there were 59 incidents of murder of women. She said 45 cases of abduction/kidnapping were reported in which 57 women were affected. She said 45 women were affected in 40 reported cases of domestic violence, while 47 women committed suicide. Tabassum said 53 honour killings were reported in which 51 women and 13 men were killed.” (The Pakistan Newswire (1 May 2009) *No respite in VAW in Sindh, 110 women murdered in first quarter of 2009: Aurat Foundation*)

A report from the *Aurat Foundation* notes a table of statistics for the Number & Percentage of Cases of VAW in Pakistan and outlines along with other forms of violence against women those related to Honour Killings during 1 July to 30 September 2008. (Aurat Foundation (13 November 2008) *“Cases of violence against women in Pakistan” Reported in the 3rd Quarter (July – September) of 2008*)

The *US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices* states under the heading ‘Women’:

“Honor killings and mutilations occurred throughout the country during the year. The Aurat Foundation reported that during the year there were 604 honor killings.

A 2005 law established penalties for honor killings. Human rights groups criticized the legislation because it allows the victim or the victim's heirs to negotiate physical or monetary restitution with the perpetrator of the crime in exchange for dropping charges, a law known as ‘qisas’ and ‘diyat.’ Because honor crimes generally occurred within families, perpetrators were able to negotiate nominal payments and avoid more serious punishment.” (US Department of State (11 March 2010) *Pakistan: Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2009*)

A report by *Amnesty International* under the heading 'Violence against women and girls' states:

"Women and girls suffered human rights violations at the hands of the state and, in the absence of appropriate government action, in the community, including "honour" killings, forced marriages, rape and domestic violence. The Protection from Harassment at the Workplace Bill, approved by the cabinet in November, and the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, submitted to the Ministry of Women Development in August, remained pending.

On 13 July, a girl, aged 16, and two women, aged 18 and 20, were reportedly abducted and taken in a car bearing a government number plate to Babakot, Jaffarabad district, Balochistan province, where they were killed apparently for wanting to marry men of their choice. A post-mortem examination revealed that two of the young women had died of head injuries inflicted with a blunt weapon. The third body was not found. A Baloch senator defended the killing as "tribal custom"; locally influential figures reportedly hampered the police investigation.

Girls were also handed over in marriage to settle disputes.

In October, three girls aged between 12 and 14 years, were forced into marriage by a jirga (informal tribal council) in Drighpur, Shikarpur district, Sindh province, to settle a dispute over an "honour" killing which had taken place two months earlier. No one was arrested." (*Amnesty International (28 May 2009) Amnesty International Report 2009 Pakistan*)

A report by *Freedom House* under the heading Freedom in the World - Pakistan (2009) states:

"According to the HRCP, at least 612 women were killed by family members in so-called honor killings in 2007, although other local rights groups suspect that the actual number may be much higher, and many more women are otherwise humiliated or maimed. Government-backed legislation enacted in 2005 introduced stiffer sentences and the possibility of the death penalty for honor killings, but activists have questioned the authorities willingness to aggressively enforce it. The tribal practice of vani, in which women are offered in marriage to settle blood feuds between rival families, continues to take place in certain parts of rural Pakistan, although there is growing opposition from the women themselves as well as social activists and religious scholars. It was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 2004, and in a landmark 2005 judgment, the court ordered local police to offer women protection. Despite legal bans, other forms of child and forced marriage continue to be a problem. Most marriages between people of different faiths are considered illegal, and the children of such unions would be legally illegitimate." (*Freedom House (2009) Freedom in the World - Pakistan (2009)*)

Under the heading 'Discrimination' a report from *Human Rights Watch* states:

"Violence against women and girls, including rape and domestic violence, and forced marriage remain serious problems. "Honor killings" were perpetrated across the country in 2008, with particularly gruesome cases reported from Sindh and Balochistan provinces. In one case, five women were reported to have been shot and buried alive for marrying against their families' wishes.

Despite condemnation from human rights groups, Israrullah Zehri, a senator from Balochistan province who publicly defended honor killings as "tribal custom," and legislator Hazar Khan Bijrani, accused of presiding over a tribal jirga (council) that in 2006 ordered the handing-over of five girls, aged six and younger, as "compensation" in a dispute, were elevated to Pakistan's cabinet by President Zardari in November 2008." (Human Rights Watch (January 2009) *World Report 2009 - Pakistan*)

A January 2007 *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response under the heading 'Prevalence and distribution of honour crimes' states:

"Despite official estimates, human rights monitors suggest that it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the extent of the problem since many honour killings go unreported (HRCP Feb. 2006, 185; AI 25 May 2005; *ibid.* 17 Apr. 2002, sec. 3.2). For example, a 2001 Punjab Women Development and Social Welfare Department study, cited in an Amnesty International (AI) report, found that rape and honour crimes were reported in only five percent of cases (AI 17 Apr. 2002, Sec. 3.1). Moreover, objective reporting cannot take place in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (FIDH 17 Jan. 2005). According to the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH), foreign journalists are denied access into the FATA, and local journalists face difficulties reporting on honour killings because of political pressure and the Pushtoon 'patriarchal ethos,' which is based on upholding tribal honour (Jan. 2005, 42).

Nevertheless, official statistics are available, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) (Feb. 2006, 185). The HRCP states that these statistics show an average of 1,000 honour killings each year (*ibid.*). However, the numbers vary, even within the government. A 2004 ministerial statement to the Senate of Pakistan indicates that 4,000 women and men were victims of honour killings in the six years leading up to 2004, and that the number of murdered women was more than double the number of men (UN 3 Aug. 2005, 124). According to an HRCP report, the Karachi-based Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) documented 31,000 crimes against women between 2000 and 2005, including murder, rape, torture, burning and kidnapping, as well as honour killing (Feb. 2006, 182). Honour killings are reportedly most prevalent in rural areas of Pakistan (ACHR 27 Oct. 2004, 1). In 2004, more than half of all reported honour killings occurred in southern Sindh province, but the practice was also believed to be widespread in Punjab, Balochistan, NWFP and the FATA (US 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5). However, the HRCP noted an increase in these types of murders in urban areas such as Lahore in 2005 (HRCP Feb. 2006, 185).

Pakistan's National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) similarly indicates that honour killings take place in urban areas and that some of these cases are committed by the urban elite (Pakistan n.d., 63).”  
(Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (24 January 2007) *Pakistan: honour killings targeting men and women, especially in the northern areas (2001 – 2006)*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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