

# DAWN

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## ✓ Persistent violence 2011

THERE is a general consensus that the more vulnerable citizens of this country are greatly exploited. Women and minorities top this list. Very often we are given stark reminders of just how bad the situation is. Aurat Foundation's recently released report documenting incidents of violence against women in Sindh is one of these reminders. It says that over 820 women were victims of violence in the province during the last six months of 2010. The report, based on media figures, says that in a large number of the incidents FIRs were not lodged, which reflects a lack of confidence citizens have in the police. There are grim reminders within the report that evil social practices persist, such as the fact that several women were exchanged like chattel to settle disputes adjudicated by illegal jirgas, or that over 130 people were killed in incidents of karo-kari.

If compared to the figures compiled by the same organisation last year, it is clear there has hardly been a change in the situation: 1,763 cases of violence against women in Sindh were reported in 2010 while the figure for 2009 is 1,762. It is alarming — not to mention sad — that such a situation persists in a province the PPP considers its stronghold. This is all the more so because the party is known for its progressive stance on social issues. What is the PPP doing to root out these evils from its hinterland? Winning a mandate from the people doesn't mean simply enjoying the perks of power. It means enacting and enforcing progressive legislation that protects the vulnerable and helps change societal attitudes. Also, as an MPA speaking at the report's launch rightly pointed out, laws to protect women already exist; the issue is enforcing them. This is an area where all Pakistani governments have been found wanting.