

## **Honour killings: Murders on rise as govt sits on pro-women bills**

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ISLAMABAD: As the government continues to drag its feet on two crucial women's protection bills, previously unpublished data has revealed that an overwhelming majority of those killing women in Punjab are husbands, brothers or fathers.

According to data compiled by the NGO Aurat Foundation, of the 724 women murdered in the province last year, 190 were killed by their husbands, 50 by their brothers and 24 by their fathers. The pattern was prevalent especially in honour killing cases, where 75 out of 170 women were killed by their brothers, 36 by their husbands and 20 by their fathers.

### **Mother of three, boyfriend killed over 'honour' in Punjab**

Despite calls for the swift passage of the anti-honour killing and anti-rape bills, the government has appeared unwilling to expedite the legislations even as incidents of violence against women increase across the country. Deepening political turmoil in the shape of anti-government protests by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and other parties has effectively kept the two pro-women bills on the backburner.

Talking to *The Express Tribune* last week, Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Farhatullah Babar accused the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government of not being serious about legislating on important issues. "After the Panama leaks, the government has become vulnerable and is pandering to the demands of religious parties," he suggested. Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Law and Justice Zafarullah Khan, however, disagreed with the notion of delay and said instead the reason was building consensus of all the stakeholders.

The two bills were originally presented in Senate in January 2014 by former senator Sughra Imam. However, they could not be presented during a joint sitting of parliament in April this year, in the face of opposition from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

A special parliamentary panel finally passed the bills unanimously on July 21, paving the way for them to be adopted during a joint parliamentary session in August. But the joint sitting was delayed amid political bickering between the government and opposition.

### **Underage girl challenges jirga's decision in court**

The two bills have proposed amendments in sections 302, 309, 310, 338-E of PPC and Section 345 CrPC to do away with the waiver of Qisas by a wali and include the offence committed in the name or on the pretext of honour. Similarly, existing provisions of sections 336-A and 336-B of PPC have also been proposed by the Cabinet Committee on Law Reforms for amendments.

Violence against women remains a serious issue in Pakistan and Punjab seems to be leading in this heinous practice. As many as 5,827 cases were reported in 2015 and Faisalabad topped the list with 1,158 cases. According to the data, Rahimyar Khan trailed behind Faisalabad with 439 cases. Rawalpindi and Lahore reported 321 cases each while Sahiwal reported 254 cases.

Violence against women included incidents of kidnappings, acid-throwing, burning, torture, Vani, Watta-Satta, murders, honour killings, rapes/gang rapes, Karo-Kari, early and forced marriages.

Beating women appeared to be the preferred mode of maiming and murdering women and 832 cases were reported in this connection while use of gun was reported in 725 cases. The use of poison stood at third

position with 623 cases while there were 612 cases of kidnapping at gunpoint.

Coercion, harassment, threats and deception were also used in violence against women.

Acid was used in 84 attacks, knives in 120 incidents. Axe and other sharp implements were used on 90 occasions, while there were 99 cases of strangulation.

### **Man who killed wife for 'honour' decade ago slays second for same reason**

The data also showed that involvement of husbands in cases of crimes against women remained the highest with 384 cases, fathers were involved in 80 such cases, 170 by brothers, 51 by parents, 43 by in-laws, 50 by former husbands, nine by step-fathers, five by step-brothers, 35 by sons, 10 by step-sons, 676 local residents, 148 neighbours, 435 by strangers, 100 by relatives, 36 by police, 19 by Pirs, 156 by influential persons.

Director Advocacy, Aurat Foundation, Rabeea Hadi said that in urban areas, specifically in industrial cities, more cases of violence against women were reported because of easy media access.

She said the factor of poverty also played an important role in these crimes.

“Women are not allowed to do things of their free will and men want to control their lives. This control mechanism generally generates domestic violence against women irrespective of the victim’s relation: she may be a wife, daughter, mother, sister or any other relative,” she maintained.

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