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Pakistan

After Years of Tragedy, Pakistan Criminalizes Honor Killings

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In recent years several countries in the region have been cracking down on the practice, which the U.N. says kills over 5,000 women a year. Pakistan's parliament unanimously passed legislation against "honor killings" Thursday, three months after the murder of an outspoken social media star. (See the article by Abida Choudary of the Awami Workers' Party below.)

A joint session of the lower and upper houses of parliament, broadcast live on television, approved the new anti-honor killing law, removing a loophole in the existing law that allowed killers to walk free after being pardoned by family members.

"Laws are supposed to guide better behavior, not allow destructive behavior to continue with impunity," said former senator Sughra Imam, who initially put forward the bill.

Some 500 women are killed each year in Pakistan at the hands of family members over perceived damage to "honor" that can involve eloping, fraternizing with men or any other infraction against conservative values relating to women.

In most cases, the victim is a woman and the killer is a relative who escapes punishment by seeking forgiveness for the crime from family members.

Under the new law, relatives can forgive convicts in the case of a death sentence, but they would still have to face a mandatory life sentence.

Source 6 October 2016 [Telesur](#).

Standing Up for Qandeel Baloch brutally strangled by her brother

As women we must stand up for ourselves.. As women we must stand up for each other...As women we must stand up for justice. I believe I am a modern day feminist. I believe in equality. I need not to choose what type of women should be. I don't think there is any need to label ourselves just for sake of society. I am just a woman with free thoughts free mindset and I LOVE THE WAY I AM."

Qandeel Baloch

Today, Qandeel Baloch was brutally strangled by her brother. From Farzana Iqbal in Lahore who was stoned to death by men from her family to Jyoti Singh who was brutally gang raped in Delhi, from transgender Alisha who was shot in Peshawar to Zeenat Rafiq who was burnt alive by her family in Lahore, Qandeel Baloch joins thousands about thousands of women in Pakistan and around the world who are brutally raped, mutilated and murdered by men. [1]

Qandeel Baloch was strangled because she refused to live the life he wanted her to live. When her family forced her

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to marry a man she did not want to live with, she ran away with her son to find sanctuary at Darul Aman. Here, she was forced to give up her only son, and found herself alone in a society that has no place for fierce and independent women. In a hostile world, she put herself through school and worked day and night as a bus hostess before joining an entertainment industry that, like the rest of the country, remains hostile against woman. With the money she pieced together she continued to support the family that had pushed her out, paying for her sister's wedding and her parents home.

Qandeel Baloch was a feminist who defied the patriarchy. She was punished for transgressing the gendered norms that are fundamental to a brutal patriarchal order. She had already been threatened several times before her death, and had contacted the Interior Ministry to ask for protection—this protection was never given. Instead, an unethical and irresponsible Pakistani media published personal details including her real name, and information on her former husband and child. The information put both her child and her person at risk.

Now, the Awami Workers Party fears that the same logic that punished Qandeel Baloch for transgressing gendered norms will attempt to justify the brutality of her death in vile and misogynistic comments.

The AWP demands justice. The government enact must immediately enact stringent laws against anti-woman killings, and ensure that perpetrators do not escape justice on the pretext of the waiver or compounding of the right of qisas by the wali of the victim. As long as these laws do not exist, the AWP demands that the government exercise its discretion under Section 311 of Pakistan Penal Code to refuse such compromises in cases of categorised as 'honour killing'.

The murder of Qandeel Baloch was not motivated by honour, but by the fragile egos and insecurities of men who fear women who refuse to listen, who demand to be seen and heard. Qandeel Baloch was killed because she did not follow directions. She refused to live within the stringent confines of a patriarchal order, where women are not allowed to step out of line. She chose to live and love, sing and dance, laugh and play, as she pleased. In her embrace of herself, without regrets, she lived the life that she wanted to live, only to be punished for being herself. In this, she was radical: Radically different, radically bold, radically political. And in this, we, the Awami Workers Party, find a comrade and a fellow feminist, and we salute her for her bravery and courage.

In Solidarity, Qandeel Baloch. Rest in Power.

16 July 2016

[1] See also 17 July 2016 [Telesur](#).