

The widespread abuse of women in their domestic spheres, in their tribal settings or in the context of bonded tribal settings or in the context of bonded labour has been widely documented by the human rights organisation as well as reported by the news media in the country. Yet the government has persistently failed to protect the victims and prevent the recurrence of rape, injuries and killings.

Domestic violence is considered a domestic matter — not subject to government interference. Some 95 per cent of women are believed to be subjected to violence, including being threatened; beaten, burned, strangled or disfigured with acid, reports Leena Maqsood.

Perpetrators have hardly ever been charged and tried and those at risk cannot rely on the state's protection and redress. The pattern of impunity surrounding these abuses, which arise from systemic discrimination against women, point to the gross failure of the status to honour its obligation to guarantee women the exercise of their fundamental rights on the basis of equality with men.

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implementation.

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Every year, an increasing number of women are burned to death in alleged stove burn incidents by their own husbands or their husbands' relatives; the reason for these murders cited by women's group are insufficient dowry, alleged infidelity, domestic feuds and assumed female infertility or absence of a son.

Fear of further abuse and lack of access to state protection force burn victims who survive, to cover up the offence by declaring that the injuries resulted from an accident. Women do not, as a rule, charge their husbands or their husbands' families with murder as they and their children have nowhere else to go if they survive. Parents often refuse to take their battered or burned daughters back from abusive husbands as they fear social censorship, shame or the added financial burden. The few existing shelters for women are totally inadequate to care for women who cannot return to their families.

Burn units in hospitals remain inadequate. In Lahore, between 60 to 70 burn victims are struggling for life at any given time — at a survival rate of under 10 per cent — in the indoor units of hospitals; many more with first degree burns are treated in outpatient departments yet Lahore has only one single 10-bed burn unit at the Mayo

A fear of lifetime

Hospital. Doctors and women activists have pointed out that the low priority given to expanding burn units is due to the fact that burn victims are usually poor and female.

The increase in women burned to death has led the High Court in Lahore to direct that all burn cases be investigated by police — a directive which seems to be ignored or only casually implemented. The agencies state that police frequently connive with the murderers to cover up the offence by declaring the death to be due to an accident or a suicide.

Women are also increasingly subjected to acid throwing by male family members, often on the mere

social setup, domestic matters are something hushed up to talk of for the people outside that very surrounding. Justice is likely to be impossible in such cases as the victims are more often than not horrified of certain circumstances. For instance, I know many such women who have got burn wounds at the hands of their husbands and have never stated against them as they fear for the days to come and the future of their offsprings, who would be at mercy of these cruel creatures after and when these victims pass away.

Moreover, the parents' exploitation of their daughter's problems may lead her to very irrational and dangerous plans of action. She

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suspicion of the victim dishonoring her family, or in revenge for a girl's family refusing a marriage proposal. Victims and victims' families often refrain from filing complaints as police habitually or after receiving a bribe, side with the offender.

Domestic violence remains out of the law enforcing agencies' control as in our

might be under pressure at the time of deciding a pretty crucial matter and then it's no one else her or her young ones who are bound to face the music.

Time demands for the personal efforts from these women as well who have to take their decisions freely so that there might not be such cases in the future.