**Is Pakistan a Safe Country for Women?**

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Georgetown Institute’s Women, Peace, and Security index ranks Pakistan in 164 out of 167 countries for the year 2019 and it is among five countries that are worst for women. Victimization has increased because of the increase in crimes and social problems and countermeasures taken by the state are insufficient and ineffective. Furthermore, the criminal justice system is the byproduct of colonial masters that has inherent contradictions with indigenous norms and culture of the society. The parallel application of Islamic laws and imported English laws has created vague circumstances and it is creating hazards in providing apt measures for the victim treatment. Further, the average conviction rate in Pakistan is 11.66 percent which is less than 37 percent in India, 85 percent in the US, and 99 percent in Japan respectively. Moreover, the conviction rate in rape and sexual assault cases is less than 3 percent. A low conviction rate is an indicator of the poor performance of our criminal judicial system.

Despite existing laws for the protection of women, they are being constrained, maimed, stabbed, and thrashed. Unfortunately, it is a painful truth that Pakistan is governed under misogynistic and patriarchal urges and is unable to protect its females from criminals and rapists. In the last couple of months, a UK-based Pakistani citizen was brutally killed in Lahore. Later on, Quratulain was allegedly murdered by her husband and her children saw how ruthlessly their mother was beaten to death. Her younger daughter said that she used music to mute the noises of the torture and maim but she along with her younger siblings heard everything even the last dying breaths of her mother. It was a heartbreaking moment when the alleged murderer left children alone with the corpse of their mother. Unfortunately, Pakistan is a country where women are killed, children are kept watching and mourning on the dead bodies of their beloved ones. Though the offender is in jail, I am confident that the monster will be out of prison either by extorting the parents of Quratulain or by paying bribes. Owing to poor institutional quality, clout wins and justice fails. This is what happens in our society for a long.

Frequent incidents have instigated anxiety in women and they are feeling insecure in their workplaces, shopping centers, and even in their homes.

A day before Eid ul Azha, another barbaric and heart-wrenching incident took place in F-7 sector Islamabad, where a son of a business tycoon gunned down, brutally stabbed, slaughtered, and beheaded a 27 years old girl. Executioner with his criminal history has crossed all limits of humanity and beyond. Therefore, it was not a murder of Noor Muqaddam only, it was the murder the entire of humanity. The offender looks like a serial killer. Nonetheless, the family of the murderer is claiming that the perpetrator is not mentally sound and is a psychopath. If it is true, then why was he running a business, and why did they not let the victim know. This barbaric and atrocious incident is though committed by a single person, many people are indirectly involved in it, for instance, the perpetrator, his parents, and security guards, and they should be punished. We are demanding that this murder should not be just an addition to the statistics in the list of crimes, but the accused should be hanged publicly to revive the notion of the sentence given in the Islamic code of conduct. This is high time to translate grief into action and attention.

Such types of frequent incidents have instigated anxiety in women and they are feeling insecure in their workplaces, shopping centers, and even in their homes. Female labor force participation is 22.18 percent in Pakistan and it has significant impacts on economic growth. However, if women will be harassed, threatened, and murdered, then it would have detrimental effects on the labor force participation rate and economic growth. Therefore, this is a challenging time for the government to form a fair judicial commission to have investigation and interrogation to serve justice to the aggrieved families of Noor, Quratulain, and many others. The government has to look hard at laws and policies to stop the violence and slaughtering of women at a massive level. There is utmost need for the amendment in the existing legal framework especially for the disadvantageous group like women and children. This can prevent any type of violence, whether it is sexual or physical. Moreover, in any case, access to justice should be made feasible.

A few years ago, I was absolutely against the Aurat march led by feminists against a misogynist and patriarchal society. But now I am convinced that such types of marches are the need of the hour to educate our women to stand against any type of violence and violation of the basic right of survival. Our participation and dissenting voices are our power to make our space in a masculine society.

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