**Tackling violence against women**

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Women play a vital role in the prosperity of any country and act as a wheel of society that is essential to run society smoothly. Almost 49% of Pakistan’s total population constitutes women. Being a heterogeneous state and exhibiting the amalgamation of various cultures, languages, and ideologies of life; the role of women in Pakistan and their participation in different spheres of society vary from culture to culture and region to region.

If we keep in view the state laws and policies, it appears that various initiatives have been undertaken to achieve and promote gender equity, and thus women are guaranteed equal rights as men. To mention a few; the right to vote, right to education, right to employment, and right to apply in various fields like bureaucracy, army, medicine, etc, where special quotas for women have been reserved, is an indication of the efforts on part of the state to bring the women at par with the men. Women of Pakistan are contributing in every field, be it science and technology, business, forces, education, civil services, you name it. When it comes to the right to education, a major chunk of the women population in Pakistan is still out of school. Due to various cultural constraints and prevalent stereotypes and taboos, women, particularly in the more conservative and rural societies, are confined to their homes. Although, over time the mindset of people has transformed and there is a significant portion of the population who prioritize education equally for their sons and daughters and motivate their daughters to seek an independent life, further awareness and facilities are needed to improve the education status of women.

[Imran Khan is heir of General Zia's political ideology: Fatima Bhutto](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/imran-khan-is-heir-of-general-zia-s-political-ideology-fatima-bhutto)

Amongst the hurdles for women in pursuance of education and contribution to society, the insecure environment remains very crucial. We have seen an exodus in trends of harassment, rape, and sexual exploitation of women when they are out for work or education. Although, state laws are strict when dealing with these vices lack of implementation has led to an increasing number of incidents where females of all ages, from school-going girls to married women, are subjected to rape and killing. Many women have been killed in the name of honour and many face domestic violence. According to a poll conducted by Thomas Reuters Foundation, Pakistan is ranked as the sixth most dangerous country for women. Many in Pakistan blame the state authorities for the recent surge in violence as they have failed to implement the laws in spirit which allow the criminals to go unpunished.

Be it 27 years old Noor Muqaddam who was murdered in cold blood; the woman raped in front of her children and left helpless on the motorway; the girl sexually assaulted in F9 park and preached to stay indoors after sunset; or the bus hostess raped by the guard at gunpoint; the list of crimes perpetrated against women is very long. There are many more cases which have been reported while many have gone unnoticed. According to the statistics, over 3,987 women were murdered across the country from 2019 to 2021, while 10 thousand 517 cases of rape against women were registered. The growing violence against women in the country has been attributed to several factors including lack of effective education, lack of awareness, poverty, and uncontrolled misogyny in the country. The free access to various unethical internet sites is also a culprit as it triggers sexual desire and society witnessed a soar in rape and harassment cases. The prevailing condition and psyche of men have made it difficult for women to go outside of their homes.

[One solider martryed, two terrorists killed in separate attacks: ISPR](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/one-solider-martryed-two-terrorists-killed-in-separate-attacks-ispr)

Therefore this issue calls for a resolution at the grass root level. The primary responsibility falls upon the parents who must treat their sons and daughters as equals and educate their sons on how every woman should be treated and respected. The curriculum at the primary level must be devised in a way where students should be taught about good and bad touch; also, it’s very necessary to give sex education to young boys and girls in their teenage years and enlighten them regarding the changes that their bodies go through. Besides, there must be awareness at all levels to educate men to respect their fellow women. Strong regulation of the internet and social media should be enabled and people spreading unethical content must be punished. The state must devise policies to stop the surge of violence against women. The culprits must be awarded strict penalties to make an example out of them.

Pakistan as a state will only prosper when its women will have a safe environment where they’ll be able to enjoy their basic rights; such as the right to education and the right to work. Although many women are contributing in various fields, a major chunk is fearful to go out of their homes because of the insecurity that they might not return home safely. Therefore efforts need to be made to make the environment safe and secure for women. All in all, there is a dire need to bring back the country to Quaid’s vision which asserts that, “No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live.”