



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Pakistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 14 May 2009**

### **Re: Information on Honour Killings.**

An April 2009 news article from the *International Campaign Against Honour Killings (Stop! honour killings)* website states:

"PESHAWAR, Pakistan -- Ayman Udas, a rising female vocalist in Peshawar, the capital of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, was shot at her home, allegedly by her own brothers.

Her death has rattled the city's jittery artistic community, as local musicians and dancers in Peshawar -- a city renowned for its vibrant artistic life -- face increasing pressure as the region falls under greater Taliban influence.

Some attributed Udas's death to the Islamist militants, but her husband told reporters that his wife was killed because she broke family traditions.

A beautiful woman in her early 30s and mother of two, Udas recently remarried after a divorce. Her two brothers, Alamgir and Ismail, disapproved of her divorce, remarriage, and her artistic career, all of which disgrace a family's name in conservative Islamic society.

The honor killing, an ancient tradition in which a male family member kills a female to "save" the family name, took place on April 27 at the family's home while Udas's husband was out picking up milk. He immediately took the case to the authorities, who have made no arrests but raided several locations in search of the suspected killers." (International Campaign Against Honour Killings (Stop! honour killings) (30 April 2009) *FEMALE PAKISTANI SINGER KILLED IN PESHAWAR*)

The *Human Rights Watch* 2009 World Report for Pakistan, under the heading 'Discrimination' states:

"Violence against women and girls, including rape and domestic violence, and forced marriage remain serious problems." Honor killings" were perpetrated across the country in 2008, with particularly gruesome cases reported from Sindh and Balochistan provinces. In one case, five women were reported to have been shot and buried alive for marrying against their families' wishes.

Despite condemnation from human rights groups, Israrullah Zehri, a senator from Balochistan province who publicly defended honor killings as "tribal custom," and legislator Hazar Khan Bijrani, accused of presiding over a tribal jirga (council) that in 2006 ordered the handing-over of five girls, aged six and younger, as "compensation" in a dispute, were elevated to Pakistan's cabinet by President Zardari in November 2008." (Human Rights Watch (14 January 2009) *World Report 2009 – Pakistan: Events of 2008*)

The *Amnesty International* 2008 report for Pakistan, under the heading 'Violence against women' states:

"Custodial violence, including rape, continued. The state failed to prevent and prosecute violence in the home and community, including mutilation, rape and "honour" killings. The NGO Aurat Foundation said that in the first 10 months of 2007 in Sindh alone, 183 women and 104 men were murdered for supposedly harming family "honour". Despite a ban on jirgas by the Sindh High Court in 2004, official support continued. In November, caretaker Minister for Information Nisar Memon stated that jirgas were a reality and should be "brought into the mainstream"." (Amnesty International (28 May 2008) *Amnesty International Report 2008 - Pakistan*)

Section 5 of the *United States Department of State's* 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Pakistan, under the heading 'Women' states:

"Honor killings and mutilations occurred throughout the country during the year. Some men were also subject to honor killings, though women represent the majority of victims. Statistics on honor crimes were unreliable due to underreporting, but there were 476 killings of women reported between January and May.

A 2005 law that established penalties for honor killings. Human rights groups criticized the legislation because it allows the victim or the victim's heirs to negotiate physical or monetary restitution with the perpetrator of the crime in exchange for dropping charges, a law known as "qisas" and "diyat." Since honor crimes generally occurred within families, perpetrators were able to negotiate nominal payments and avoid more serious punishment." (United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (25 February 2009) *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*)

A September 2008 *IRIN News* report states:

"QUETTA, 1 September 2008 (IRIN) - Several weeks ago armed tribesmen in Balochistan forced five women out of their village, shot and injured them, and buried them alive in the scrub.

According to the Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), the five were from the village of Babakot, about 80km from Usta Mohammad, the main city of Jaffarabad District, Balochistan Province.

Three of the women were teenagers. The other two were their mothers. The AHRC said wild animals had left the bodies half eaten.

They were killed because the girls had attempted to make their own choice in marriage, a right legally available in Pakistan to every adult, male or female.

"There is nothing in law that can prevent a woman over 18 making her own decision regarding marriage. That has been decided by the Supreme Court, and there is no ambiguity about this. But still, today, women continue to be killed in the name of the 'honour' of their families for making such decisions," said Naila Hassan, a Quetta-based lawyer.

According to the Lahore-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Aurat Foundation, 90 women were killed in so-called "honour" killings in the first three months of 2008. The same NGO said that in 2007 over 400 such deaths occurred in Sindh Province alone.

The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said there were 636 "honour" killings in 2007. Its secretary-general, I. A. Rehman, said: "The number could be higher as many cases go unreported." (IRIN News (01 September 2008) *PAKISTAN: Buried alive in the name of tradition*)

The 2008 *Freedom House* Freedom in the World report for Pakistan, under the heading 'Political Rights and Civil Liberties' states:

"According to the HRCP, at least 636 women were killed by family members in so-called honor killings in 2007, although other local rights groups suspect that the actual number may be much higher, and many more are otherwise humiliated or mutilated. Government-backed legislation enacted in 2005 introduced stiffer sentences and the possibility of the death penalty for honor killings. However, given a prevailing environment in which authorities do not aggressively prosecute the perpetrators of violence against women, activists questioned the effectiveness of the bill. The tribal practice of vani, in which women are offered in marriage to settle blood feuds between rival families, continues to take place in certain parts of rural Pakistan, although there is growing opposition to the practice by the women themselves as well as social activists and religious scholars. It was declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 2004, and in a landmark December 2005 judgment, the court ordered local police to offer women protection. Despite legal bans, other forms of child and forced marriage continue to be a problem." (Freedom House (02 July 2008) *Freedom in the World 2008 – Pakistan*)

An April 2007 news article from the *Hindustan Times* states:

"Karachi, April 13 -- A Pakistan-based NGO has compiled facts and figures suggesting that honour killings, or karo-kari, were still on the rise. While as many as 1305 people, including women, children and men, were murdered across the nation during 2006, 262 persons have already been victimized during the first three months of the current year.

The major cities where most karo-kari cases occurred included Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Jacobabad, Lahore and Multan.

Madadgaar Helpline, the NGO, said that from January to December 2006 among a total of 1305 cases, 792 were women; 472 were men; 34 were underage girls, and seven were underage boys.

The provincial breakdown of cases showed that Sindh was in the lead with 718 cases, while in Punjab the number of cases was 453, in NWFP 83 and in Balochistan the number of cases was 51, the Dawn quoted the findings of the NGO as saying." (Hindustan Times (13 April 2007) *Honour killings show no sign of decline in Pakistan*)

A January 2007 *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response under the heading 'Prevalence and distribution of honour crimes' states:

"Despite official estimates, human rights monitors suggest that it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the extent of the problem since many honour killings go unreported (HRCP Feb. 2006, 185; AI 25 May 2005; *ibid.* 17 Apr. 2002, sec. 3.2). For example, a 2001 Punjab Women Development and Social Welfare Department study, cited in an Amnesty International (AI) report, found that rape and honour crimes were reported in only five percent of cases (AI 17 Apr. 2002, Sec. 3.1). Moreover, objective reporting cannot take place in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (FIDH 17 Jan. 2005). According to the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH), foreign journalists are denied access into the FATA, and local journalists face difficulties reporting on honour killings because of political pressure and the Pushtoon "patriarchal ethos," which is based on upholding tribal honour (Jan. 2005, 42).

Nevertheless, official statistics are available, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) (Feb. 2006, 185). The HRCP states that these statistics show an average of 1,000 honour killings each year (*ibid.*). However, the numbers vary, even within the government. A 2004 ministerial statement to the Senate of Pakistan indicates that 4,000 women and men were victims of honour killings in the six years leading up to 2004, and that the number of murdered women was more than double the number of men (UN 3 Aug. 2005, 124). According to an HRCP report, the Karachi-based Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) documented 31,000 crimes against women between 2000 and 2005, including murder, rape, torture, burning and kidnapping, as well as honour killing (Feb. 2006, 182).

Honour killings are reportedly most prevalent in rural areas of Pakistan (ACHR 27 Oct. 2004, 1). In 2004, more than half of all reported honour killings occurred in southern Sindh province, but the practice was also believed to be widespread in Punjab, Balochistan, NWFP and the FATA (US 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5). However, the HRCP noted an increase in these types of murders in urban areas such as Lahore in 2005 (HRCP Feb. 2006, 185). Pakistan's National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) similarly indicates that honour killings take place in urban areas and that some of these cases are committed by the urban elite (Pakistan n.d., 63)." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (24 January 2007) *Pakistan: honour killings targeting men and women, especially in the northern areas (2001 – 2006)*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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