

Relentless violence

Shazia Nizamani | Published December 4, 2022



The writer is a lawyer.

LISTEN TO ARTICLE 0:00 / 6:07 1x 1.2x 1.5x

ANOTHER day, another shocking incident of gender-based violence (GBV) in the country.

In November, in a heart-wrenching incident, a seven-year-old girl was raped and murdered in Quaidabad, Karachi. There were extensive injuries to her body. According to the police, the girl had gone missing the day before and her body was found thrown on an under-construction building site.

In October, a nine-year-old girl from a family of flood refugees from Shikarpur district was abducted and gang-raped in Karachi. In a statement to the police, the doctor who examined the child said that the condition of the victim was so terrible that she had to be examined in the operation theatre.

In September, a rich, well-educated young woman named Sarah Inam, a dual Canadian-Pakistani national, was brutally murdered allegedly by her husband Shahnawaz Amir at his farmhouse in Islamabad. This case of GBV has slipped off the radar as the media no longer covers the legal proceedings. It seems as if the matter has been hushed up.

GBV is endemic, relentless and classless. It has a serious impact on the physical, mental and emotional health of girls and women. Their lives are always at risk. A number of reports of international organisations suggest that violence against women and girls has reached devastating levels across the globe.

Incidents of gender-based violence are underreported.

According to a UN report, one in three females aged 15 or older, or approximately 736 million women and girls worldwide, have suffered physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence or both at

least once in their life. The most recent global estimate revealed that a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes on average.

Let's focus on Pakistan. Statistics on violence against women here show a sharp increase during the last three years. Representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights informed the National Assembly in October that 63,367 cases of violence against women were registered in the country during the last three years. According to National Police Bureau data, 11,160 were rape/gang-rape cases. Out of this total, 4,637 rape/gang-rape cases were registered in 2019; 4,133 in 2020 and 2,390 in 2021.

Aside from this, 1,578 women were murdered in 2019, while 1,569 were slain in 2020 and 840 in 2021. The year 2019 saw 2,018 cases women being beaten. In 2020, there were 2,019 cases reported and 1,134 women received punches, kicks and slaps in 2021. There were 13,916 cases of kidnapping registered in 2019; in 2020, there were 12,809 cases filed; another 7,651 cases were registered in 2021. During the last three years, 77 cases of incest and 103 cases of acid-throwing were filed with the police. The perennial question is: how many such cases have not been registered?

Other offences filed with the police in the last three years include vani (which often involves marriage of underage girls), custodial violence, physical harassment, sexual harassment and 7,137 cases of abduction of females. This worrying trend shows how unsafe most women and girls are in Pakistan. And these are police statistics: the actual number could be much higher as most such cases are not reported or registered with law enforcement. It can be safely assumed that incidents of GBV are underreported in Pakistan, and have an extremely low conviction rate.

Although various laws on GBV have been passed, it is not enough to prevent such incidents. Enacting legislation may be the first step, but unless it is translated into policy and its implementation ensured, there is not much impact. Many bottlenecks have to be removed before we see any significant reduction in cases.

Some of the main reasons that create hindrance in reporting cases are: ineffective implementation of laws, inefficient police investigation and discouraging police attitude towards women survivors, victim-blaming, social stigma, no social support mechanisms, gender-insensitive court environment, and slow and lengthy court proceedings.

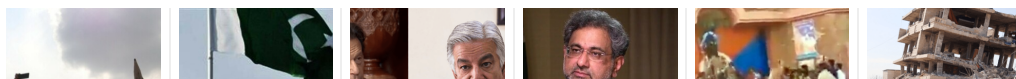
From Nov 25 to Dec 10, the UN is marking 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence under the theme, 'UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls'. Pakistan is also part of this global campaign. The Pakistani government should encourage multi-sectoral coordinated efforts with UN agencies, women rights organisations and the media. The Ministry of Human Rights, National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women and other rights bodies must develop mechanisms for close coordination and engagement to promote and protect women's rights.

The need of the hour is to develop short-term and long-term multipronged strategies and policies to address this issue holistically. Instead of limiting themselves to a few awareness-raising seminars and publications, the commissions, NGOs and federal and provincial governments should focus resources and services on women survivors of gender-based violence.

The writer is a lawyer.

Published in Dawn, December 4th, 2022

Latest Stories





Iran marks 44th anniversary of revolution as hackers interrupt state TV coverage



Pakistani diaspora in US contributes \$30m to victims in Turkiye-Syria quake



Imran denies money laundering allegation in defamation suit against Khawaja Asif



PML.-N's Abbasi says Imran could file treason case against Bajwa



Nankana Sahib DSP, SHO suspended after violent mob lynches man over blasphemy allegations



Miracle rescues as Turkiye-Syria quake toll passes 25,000

IMAGES



The Kashmir conflict has been depicted in film many a time but not nearly enough



Komal Rizvi says her ex-husband hit her head with a frying pan for serving cold food



Renowned writer and poet Amjad Islam Amjad passes away at 78 in Lahore

Most Popular

01 Pakistan agrees to IMF conditions, staff-level accord still pending: Dar	02 Govt, IMF finalise 'prior actions', no word yet on key accord	03 Pakistan will have to enter another IMF programme immediately after this one: Miftah
04 Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves fall below \$3bn	05 Cartoon: 10 February, 2023	06 'Difficult times': PM Shehbaz says Pakistan has established a Rs10bn relief fund for quake-hit Turkiye
07 The red line	08 If Pakistan defaulted...	09 Uproar in Senate over CJP's 'incomplete parliament' remarks

Must Read



Editorial: Things can get a lot more difficult for Pakistan if IMF talks drag on unnecessarily

We don't know exactly what the final agreement with the IMF would entail for the people.



The worst cost-of-living period on record in Pakistan is morphing into a social and public health crisis



How much TV do Pakistanis watch?



Amjad Islam Amjad: The poet of romance



Policy responses to address education-related issues need to be holistic and require a coherent approach

Opinion



Inflation and its discontents

Sakib Sherani
Food inflation in countries such as Pakistan has a direct bearing on poverty outcomes.



Updated 11 Feb, 2023
Education: rural futures
Hina Saleem



11 Feb, 2023
Women's mobility
Zofeen T. Ebrahim



11 Feb, 2023
Regulating pharma
Ayesha Tammy Haq



Updated 10 Feb, 2023
Independent central bank
Riaz Riazuddin

Editorial

Updated 11 Feb, 2023

Final IMF deal?

We don't know exactly what the final agreement with the IMF would entail for the people.

11 Feb, 2023

Moscow boycott

NATURE abhors a vacuum, and if Pakistan does not attend key international meetings, it leaves the field open to...

11 Feb, 2023

Fuel shortages

WE should have seen this coming. As has become the norm over the past 10 months or so, reports of a looming shortage...

Updated 10 Feb, 2023

Ridiculous laws

The criminalisation of defamation will come back to haunt those championing it today.

10 Feb, 2023

Victim-blaming

ONE of the perpetrators of the gang rape in Islamabad's F-9 park had 'advice' for the victim that showed him ...

10 Feb, 2023

Jumbo cabinet

AT a time when the nation is struggling to maintain financial solvency, the federal government is sending all the...

