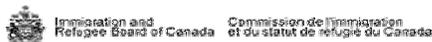


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# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

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24 January 2007

#### PAK101175.E

Pakistan: Honour killings targeting men and women, especially in the northern areas (2001 - 2006)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

There is an extensive amount of information on honour killings in Pakistan, primarily focusing on female victims. Honour killings are described as a custom (HRW n.d.; HRCP Feb. 2005, 19; Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, 2) in which mostly women and some men are murdered after accusations of sexual infidelity (ibid.; AI 23 May 2006; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.a). The killers seek to avenge the shame that victims are accused of bringing to their families (HRW n.d.). However, even girls (AI 23 May 2006; ibid. 25 May 2005) and, on a smaller scale, boys are victims of the practice (ibid. 23 May 2006).

Honour killings are known by different names depending on the area in Pakistan in which they are practised (Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, iii-iv). In Sindh province they are referred to as *karo kari* (ibid. 25 Nov. 2001, iii), where *karo* refers to the "blackened" or dishonoured man and *kali* to the "blackened" woman (*Christian Science Monitor* 20 Jan. 2005); they are called *tor tora* in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), where *tor* refers to the accused man and *tora* to the accused woman; *kala kali* in Punjab province, where *kala* refers to the accused man and *kali* refers to the accused woman; and *sinyahkari* in Balochistan (Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, iii-iv).

#### Prevalence and distribution of honour crimes

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).

Pakistan's *Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004* provides women protection against "offences committed in name or on the pretext of honour" (HRCP Feb. 2005, 18-19), and its constitution enshrines the principle of equality before the law (ibid. Feb 2006, 173). Yet, according to the NCSW, the state is failing to punish those guilty of honour killing (Pakistan n.d., 26). Calling it a "miscarriage of justice,"

the NCSW reports that from 1997 to mid-2003, conviction rates for cases of honour killings were over 90 percent in NWFP and Sindh, 43 percent in Balochistan and 72 percent in Punjab (ibid.). In an effort to specifically target and criminalize honour killings, the government amended the country's Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in October 2004 (HRCP Feb. 2005, 18-19). Despite passage of the bill, there were still Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) who condoned honour killings as a traditional custom (HRCP Feb. 2005, 174). With attitudes slow to change and uncertainty around how the state would enforce the new legislation (ibid.), the HRCP pointed to data a year later showing an increase in the number of homicides of women nationwide and said they found no information to suggest that honour killings had declined (ibid. Feb. 2006, 174, 182). It should be noted, however, that in its annual country report, the United States Department of State indicates that Pakistan-based human rights organizations recorded 1,458 honour killings in 2004 (US 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 1.a) and 1,211 honour killings in 2005 (ibid. 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1.a), which represents nearly 250 fewer deaths.

### Justification and Motives

Honour killings are often carried out by men who believe their honour has been breached by the sexual misconduct of female family members, even when it is only an allegation (HRW n.d.; AI Aug. 2002, 8). The tribal justice system, for example, makes it incumbent upon husbands and male relatives to restore family honour damaged by allegations of a woman's sexual misdeed, usually by killing the woman and her alleged lover (ibid.). The NCSW indicates that it is not just honour killings but all forms of domestic violence that are "frequently intended to punish a woman for a perceived insubordination supposedly impacting on male honour" (Pakistan n.d., 68). The media in Pakistan reports stories indicating that the male companion of the accused female will also be killed in the name of protecting family honour (*Dawn* 27 Apr. 2006), or for marrying a woman from another tribal group without the consent of her parents, to restore the honour of her tribe (ibid. 26 June 2006).

These honour killings are based on the belief that women are symbols of male honour and a reflection of a man's social status (Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, 38; AI Aug. 2002, 8). In such a world view, says a representative from the Simorgh Women's Resource and Publication Centre, a self-described feminist organization based in Lahore (Simorgh n.d.), women are the property of men, and daughters are exchanged between families in marriage (Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, 38-39). As a result, men are responsible for women's "chastity and fidelity," the status of which affects his and the family's honour, and he is deemed justified in using violence to control her actions (ibid., 39; see also *Christian Science Monitor* 20 Jan. 2005).

Demonstrations of attempts to control and punish women are evident in NCSW case stories, which show that between 1997 and 2003, women who attempted to chose their own husbands were either killed or detained under the Hudood Ordinances (Pakistan n.d., 63-65). The Ordinances, which were implemented in 1979 (HRW n.d.), make rape, adultery and extramarital sex criminal offences punishable by flogging, stoning and death (ibid.; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). The NCSW also has case stories about women who were killed to restore family honour because the women had sought divorce, and of women killed by their ex-husbands to prevent them from remarrying (Pakistan n.d., 66-67).

This last example shows what the NCSW has identified as a tendency to commit crimes under the guise of honour killing (Pakistan n.d., 67). In fact, sources have identified a wide range of motives for honour killings in Pakistan, including to

- maintain family assets (ibid., 26-27);
- acquire another family's assets (ibid.);
- prevent women from freely choosing their husband (ICG 18 Apr. 2005, 26);
- punish women for seeking divorce, having been raped or having disobeyed family wishes (*Dawn* 28 Nov. 2005);
- seek revenge on an opponent (ibid.); and
- disguise the murder of another man (Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, 27).

The Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre explains that underlying these so-called honour killings may be poverty and economic inequality (ibid., 26). By accusing a man of involvement in an illicit relationship with a female family member, the aggrieved family can demand compensation from the co-accused man (ibid.). In an April 2002 report, AI notes that "fake 'honour' killings" may be on the increase; these are situations in which men falsely accuse and kill an innocent female relative to extort money from the co-accused man in exchange for sparing his life (17 Apr. 2002, Sec. 2.9).

### Methods of killing and sequence of events

A 1999 AI report indicates that a man can only restore his honour by killing both the woman and the man accused of illicit relations with her (1 Sept. 1999). However, because women are generally killed first, the co-accused men often manage to escape (AI 1 Sept. 1999). If the man with the tarnished honour and the accused man agree, a meeting of tribal elders is convened to determine the accused man's fate (ibid.). In order to correct the imbalance of honour and avoid death, the accused must compensate the family he dishonoured (ibid.; *Christian Science Monitor* 20 Jan. 2005; Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, 23). Compensation may be financial or it may be a woman to replace the woman who has been killed (ibid., 24; AI 1 Sept. 1999). The Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre notes that in Punjab tribal leaders may determine an accused man's fate by having him walk across burning embers; a man whose feet do not burn is deemed innocent (25 Nov. 2001). Amnesty International reports that this practice has also been noted in Balochistan and only rarely in Sindh (AI Aug. 2002, 13).

Honour killings are most often committed by male family members, including husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, although women occasionally perpetrate the killing (Pakistan n.d., 62). Generally, an accusation is made first, but there have been instances where a man has killed another man and then killed a female family member, accusing her of illicit sexual relations with the deceased to avoid paying compensation (Shirkat Gah 25 Nov. 2001, 18) or to escape punishment for the murder (Pakistan n.d., 67).

Methods of death vary depending on location (ibid., 62; AI 1 Sept. 1999). For example, the practice in Punjab is usually to kill victims with firearms; it is generally the perpetrator who makes the decision, but on some occasions killings follow *jirga* (tribal council) orders (Pakistan n.d., 62). In Sindh the victims are often killed with axes (AI 1 Sept. 1999; Pakistan n.d., 62). The NCSW has also documented cases in Sindh and Punjab provinces where the accused were tortured at length prior to death (ibid., 64). Country-wide statistics collected by the HRCP in 2004 and 2005 showed that other methods included fire, hanging, poison and strangulation, but the most common method was shooting (HRCP n.d.a.; ibid. n.d.b.). The statistics also revealed that some victims were raped, gang-raped, kidnapped or tortured

before being killed (ibid.; ibid. n.d.). A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report indicates that some women accused of illicit sex are set on fire by their attackers (n.d.).

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There are reported instances in which instead of being killed women are sold or exchanged as part of the honour settlement (Pakistan n.d., 62-63), or they are maimed by husbands or other male relatives (HRCP Feb. 2006, 187-188; AI 23 May 2006). Over the course of 2005, these mutilations included such crimes as chopping off or cutting out the women's feet, legs, nose, lips or eyes for alleged promiscuity and immorality (HRCP Feb. 2006, 187-188; see also AI 23 May 2006). Women accused of sexual misdemeanours are also sometimes scarred with acid (Adjunct Professor 1 June 2006).

*Kari* women remain "dishonoured" even in death (Pakistan n.d., 62) and are generally denied proper funerals (Shirkat Gah, 25 Nov. 2001, 21). The NCSW reports that the remains of female victims are dismembered and thrown into rivers or "buried in special hidden *kari* graveyards," while men killed after being declared *karo* are generally buried in "the communal graveyard" (Pakistan n.d., 62).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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