

# Sindh Human Rights Commission

## Report: Consultation on Honour Killing

October 18, 2019

Hotel Mehran, Karachi



Government of Sindh



**Karo Kari/Honour Killing  
A Crime Against Humanity  
Exploring Causes & Interventions**



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## **About the Sindh Human Rights Commission**

The Sindh Human Rights Commission is a statutory body with a mandate to protect fundamental human rights in the province of Sindh, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The Commission is empowered to hold inquiry, suo moto or on a petition, into cases of human rights violations, recommend to the government remedial measures, review policies and legislation on human rights protection from the perspective of human rights, undertake research and promote awareness of laws, procedures and safeguards available for human rights protection. The Commission is also mandated to visit government facilities and institutions (i.e. jails, shelters) to review living conditions of inmates and make recommendations for improvements.

Established in 2013 under the Sindh Protection of Human Rights Act 2011, the Commission functions under the Sindh Human Rights Commission Rules 2013.

The Commission is led by Chairperson, Justice (Retd) Majida Razvi, and supported by six members. Out of six members, two are full-time members qualified as District and Sessions judges - Syed Hassan Shah Bukhari - District and Session Judge (Retired), Muhammad Aslam Shaikh - Additional District and Session Judge. Two members come from the Provincial Assembly - Kulsoom Akhtar Chandio - MPA, Sindh, Farhat Seemen - MPA, Sindh. And two are drawn from the civil society - Syed Zulfiqar Shah - Human Rights and Civil Society Activist, Pushpa Kumari - Civil Society and Minority Rights Activist; and Ms Abida Lodhi is the Secretary of the Commission.

As an independent body delegated to work for the protection and promotion of human rights in the province, the Commission extends its services indiscriminately to all individuals reaching out for petitions.

Since its establishment, the Commission has undertaken close to over 800 cases. It has led review of laws and implementation mechanisms, capacity building programmes of stakeholders in public and civil society sectors, and also led the process of review of mechanisms for implementation of the conventions related to the trade incentive of GSP+, extended to Pakistan.

As per law, the Commission conducts board meetings every quarter. It also follows an annual work plan drawn from its consultation-led 5-year Strategic Plan. SHRC also takes out annual report every year to share its activities and future plans with stakeholders and general public.

## Proceedings: Consultation on Honour Killings

The Sindh Human Rights Commission organised a one-day consultation titled 'Karo Kari/Honour Killing — A Crime Against Humanity: Reasons and Challenges in Stopping the Menace' in Karachi. To discuss the issue from its various aspects and find solutions to tackle honour killing, a panel comprising federal and provincial lawmakers, representatives of the legal fraternity and law enforcement agencies, as well as members of the civil society was present at the occasion.



The event also had attendees from different disciplines to partake in the consultation and share recommendations on dealing with the perils of honour killing in the province. Hosted by SHRC, the consultation was moderated by Zulfiqar Shah, the Joint Director of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER). He invited all the esteemed panellists and participants at the consultation and provided an overview of honour killing deeming it as a very serious and important issue that the province has been tackling for a long time.

## Welcome note by Chairperson SHRC Justice (Retd) Majida Razvi



Chair of the Sindh Human Rights Commission Justice (retd.) Majida Razvi welcomes attendees at the consultation

Chairperson of the Sindh Human Rights Commission Justice (Retd) Majida Razvi welcomed all the participants and shared the objectives of the consultation. She shed light on the gravity of honour killing in Sindh and spoke about the severity of its impact on the state of human rights in the province. Ms Razvi stated that the issue has been in news quite frequently and was also taken up by

the Chief Minister of Sindh in the provincial assembly. She stated that the issue is a major contributor to human rights violations and following its deep-seated impact on the province and its citizens, the SHRC considered it imperative to organise a consultation and brainstorm with experts on how to rid the society of this nuisance.



“Landmark judgements have been given on honour killing. Several legislations have been done in the past and yet we see immense lack of implementation of the law. We have already discussed all those aspects with respect to honour killing in Sindh. But the way to tackle it can only be explored with the help of several factions of the society, which is why we thought that this consultation would be a useful platform to gather solutions and ideas to control the issue in the province,” she said.

She also shared her experience of visiting rural areas of northern Sindh with her team to assess the state of human rights in the region. However, she stated that she was shocked to see the living conditions of the people living in those areas. “The children hardly have any clothes to cover their bodies, let alone eat a healthy, nutritious meal. There is no infrastructure for people living in those areas to commute from one place to another and basic health facilities are nowhere to be found. The state of poverty is such in the region that people find it easier to earn some money by selling their daughters off and they feel no remorse for doing so. They are oblivious to the fact that what they are doing is, in fact, a crime,” said Justice (Retd) Razvi.

She wrapped up her welcome note by saying that the consultation has been organised, so that participants can exchange ideas, share past experiences and discuss how to save the lives and future of women in the province.

### **Keynote speech by Nafisa Shah – MNA, PPP**

Member of the National Assembly and head of the Pakistan Peoples Party’s (PPP) Human Rights Cell, Ms Nafisa Shah was the keynote speaker at the consultation. Ms Shah started the speech by sharing her experience of working on the subject of honour killings as a journalist.

“I’ve lived most of my life in urban Sindh, which is why I was not aware of the sufferings of women in rural Sindh. The brutality was a part of the folklore of these regions and the upper Sindh belt after Baloch migration contributed to an increase in honour killings.



Ms Nafisa Shah addresses attendees at the consultation

Following my extensive work as a journalist and then as a PhD student, the subject has become very close to me. We usually end up stereotyping the issue. It is too simplistic to say *karo kari* (honour killing) a custom alone; it is simplistic to say that it exists in a timeless, age-old, feudal traditions; it is too simplistic to say that it occurs due to brutal masculinity; it is too simplistic to say that it is a carryover from the past and it is also too simplistic to say that it is because of private justice such as *jirga*. Therefore, my initial research was focused on the stereotypes. The urban understanding of honour killings is also based on these stereotypes,” she said.

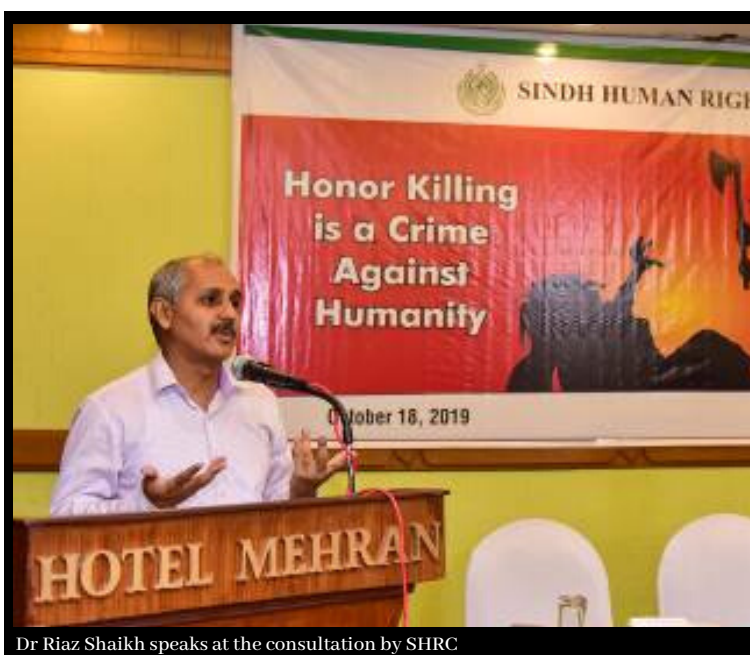
Considering her work based on the cultural aspects, criminal justice and the law, she shared that the *jirga* is not the only problematic feature when one discusses honour killing. Ms Shah stated that the criminal justice system, the law and the criminal procedure are all equally problematic. “Whatever happens in the normative world, mirrors what happens in the outside world,” she said. Ms Shah also believes that the so-called garb of Islamisation has also had a lot of impact on the criminal justice procedure. She said that it is very important to talk about laws and legislation made to counter such crimes. There are several laws and legislation but hardly any implementation. Following the strong influence of restorative justice she stated that it occurs due to the weak investigation and criminal justice systems. She said that we are promoting vigilante systems and honour killing by not doing anything concrete enough. She ended her keynote speech by adding that modernisation and reforms within the formal state and justice system are required to counter honour killings in the province.

### **Panel speakers at the Consultation**

Following are the esteemed panellists who shared their viewpoints and experiences with respect to cases of honour killing in the province, as well as recommendations on how it can be dealt with.

#### **Dr Riaz Ahmed Shaikh – Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, SZABIST**

As a panel speaker, Mr Riaz Ahmed Shaikh deemed the subject of honour killing as a crucial one that required immense discussion and dialogue with respect to finding its solutions. He said that the fundamental issue in honour killing stem from the customs and laws. “We have all the laws to deal with issues such as *karo kari* and wani, but the customs become obstacles when trying to counter honour killing,” he said. He shared that the intervention of the state is very important to consider when working on issues related to violence against women, particularly honour killing. He questioned the role of the state and shared how it has deliberately ruined the situation in the province. He also lamented about the decline of the society’s social fabric, which is further deteriorating the situation.



Dr Riaz Shaikh speaks at the consultation by SHRC

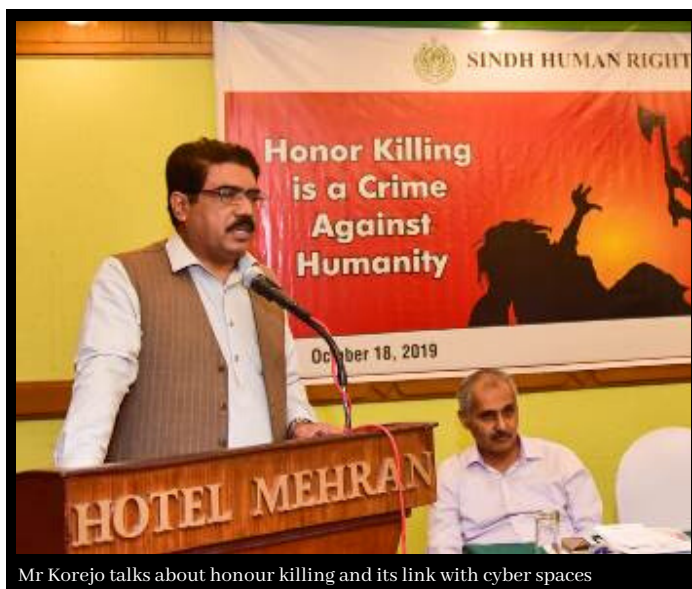
Dr Shaikh shared that it is difficult for women to live in Pakistan since patriarchy and toxic masculinity are deeply entrenched in our society. He also shed light on the need for the political elite to play their role in this matter and said that political will is imperative when working towards countering violence on women. “Until and unless we let go of our customs and traditions, nothing will change,” he said.

He also spoke about the cases of honour killing that are increasingly becoming a norm in urban centres.

“The presence of honour killing in urban centres is more alarming. We are not challenging the social structure, in fact, we are reinforcing it. We cannot come to a solution unless we address the bigger issues surrounding the problem of honour killing,” he said at the end of his speech.

### **Faizullah Korejo – Additional Director Cyber Crime Wing, FIA**

Mr Faizullah Korejo shared his knowledge of having worked for the Cybercrime Wing of FIA, which in some way or the other are connected to honour killing and violence against women in the province. He highlighted that the response of women towards the digital media in urban centres is different from that in rural areas, following the impact of customs and traditions. In rural areas, ignorance towards the hazards of technology is very high as compared to urban cities. “A woman from Ghotki would know how to use a Facebook account but she is possibly unaware of the hazards that come with its use,” he said and shared how not having enough knowledge regarding the ills of the cyber world can get women in trouble for something as apparently harmless as posting their photograph on social media.



Mr Korejo talks about honour killing and its link with cyber spaces

He said that cases of honour killing, particularly of women, are prevalent in regions where tribes have a strong influence on the locals. It is, therefore, important for one to study the subject and be aware about the weak areas where tribal wars are rampant followed by lack of governance and development, which is why people look up to tribal leaders and jirgas, instead of expecting effective action by the state.

“When offences are compoundable, the two parties involved in the issue tend to

rely on the decisions made by tribal or social leaders or a male figure related to the woman such as her husband, father, brother or grandfather gets to decide her fate,” he said adding that such cases do not even reach the court of justice. Witnesses get hostile, affidavits are presented and there is little to no prosecution.

Mr Korejo shared his learning from the data he has analysed while working for the Cybercrime Wing at FIA stating that women are largely the victims of cyber crime. However, their representation is very low with respect to laws and punishments in cases of violence against women, especially honour killing. “They, too, need to be made stakeholders,” he said.

## Justice (Retd) S. Ali Aslam Jafri – Former judge of the Supreme Court



Justice (retd.) Jafri speaks at the consultation

Former judge of Supreme Court Justice (Retd) S. Ali Aslam Jafri also shared his remarks as one of the panellists at the consultation. Following his vast experience of working on the subject of karo kari and criminal cases, Justice (Retd) Jafri said that one wonders what could be the reason behind our inability to deal with the issue of honour killing.

“It is possibly the lack of education or the rapid increase in our population or it is probably our social fabric, since we make laws but find no implementation happening. It is pertinent to look at the reasons behind honour killings,” said Justice (retd) Jafri.

He further shared that there is conflict between customs and laws. However, customs seem much stronger in comparison. Therefore, there is an urgent need to end these customs that

encourage honour killing in the province. Justice (Retd) Jafri stated that we have not done enough to work against feudalism. “The control of feudal system over the government is the reason why reforms are a far-fetched idea. When one wants to make legislations, the tribal and feudal systems tend to pressurise. An issue like honour killing cannot be solved in a matter of days,” he opined and added, “Awareness is key and can only be obtained through the dissemination of education in the province. The age-old fabric of our society, where only the powerful get to have their rights, needs to be shattered, so that people can look towards industrialisation and become self-sufficient.”

Towards the end of his speech, Justice (Retd) Jafri stated that our society must get rid of the centuries-old mindset. The state has not been able to solve the issues and can only do so once they take issues like honour killing and violence against women seriously. “Everyone is responsible to make their contribution towards the cause,” he said.

## Anis Haroon – Member, Sindh, National Commission for Human Rights



Ms Haroon delivers her speech at the consultation

Former member of the National Commission for Human Rights in Sindh, Ms Anis Haroon joined the consultation as a panellist. During her speech she said the matter is assuming larger scale with passing time “Every other day, we witness a new wave of honour killing. We are not even fully aware of the numbers for many cases go unreported following the involvement of families,” she said and added that according to SHRC’s annual report from 2016, 118 cases of honour killing took place, but no one know what the actual figures because several cases never make it to the surface.

Ms Haroon spoke about honour killing being deemed a compoundable offence. “According to the law in 2004, karo



kari was not be compounded. However, at the time of enactment, the law was deemed compoundable,” she said and added that there is immense pressure on the judiciary and police when dealing with cases of honour killing. The conviction rate for case of violence against women is roughly 4-5 per cent.

Ms Haroon also shared that there are many aspects behind the prevalence of honour killing in the province and property disputes are also one of the reason. When discussing about the urgency to deal with the matter she said, “The entire belt where honour killings are prevalent should be declared no-go areas for women. An emergency should be declared to deal with cases of violence against women in the vulnerable region.”

Ms Haroon also pointed towards the need for gender sensitisation among investigation officers who are dealing with honour killing cases and stressed upon the state to take responsibility of such issues. “Rule of law is crucial when dealing with cases of violence against women, while the need to end compoundability is also imperative,” she said and added that ever since the inclusion of qisas and diyat in the law, the cases of honour killings have increased. Ms Haroon lastly urged for reforms to be done with respect to the province’s criminal justice systems.

### **Mahnaz Rahman – Resident Director, Aurat Foundation**

Mahnaz Rahman, the Resident Director of Aurat Foundation, also participated at the consultation as one of the most notable figures for women’s rights movement in Pakistan. She talked about the progressive Bhutto era during the early and mid 70s and shared about her experiences of being able to live as an educated and independent woman in a country where many women were still not aware about their basic fundamental rights.

“The country was progressive during Bhutto’s era. However, the youth of our time was not aware about the lack of progress in rural areas of the province. We only got to know about their sufferings by reading literature that depicted the true lives of those living in far-fetched areas of Sindh,” she said and further added that during their youth, she and her friends read stories written by Saeeda Gazdar, which were based on women who were victims of violence or honour killings from rural Sindh.



Ms Rahman speaks at the consultation event addressing the attendees

“So many years have passed and yet we are still discussing the same issues in this day and age, where everything has modernised expect for out-dated attitudes. We need to understand that a woman is not a private property. Karo kari is a blackmailing industry and it is a sad reality that we are still struggling to fight against it,” said Ms Rahman.

## Abdul Khaliq Shaikh — DIG Headquarter, Sindh Police

The DIG Headquarter Sindh Police, Mr Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, shared some very important insights into the statistical aspect of the crime of honour killing. He said that the menace of karo karo/honour killing is deeply entrenched in our customs.

Following his experience of working as DIG Larkana six years ago, he said that he had written a book on karo kari and a training manual for officers to deal with such cases. Talking about the many cases he has viewed as an academic, Mr Shaikh believes it is the incompetency of our criminal justice system that has enabled the issue to infiltrate deep within the fabric of our society.



DIG Headquarters Mr Shaikh informs attendees about the number of cases Sindh has witnessed with respect to honour killings

Sharing the statistics related to honour killings in Sindh, the DIG Headquarters Sindh Police said that honour killing cases in Sindh are comparatively fewer than those recorded last year, yet they are equally alarming.

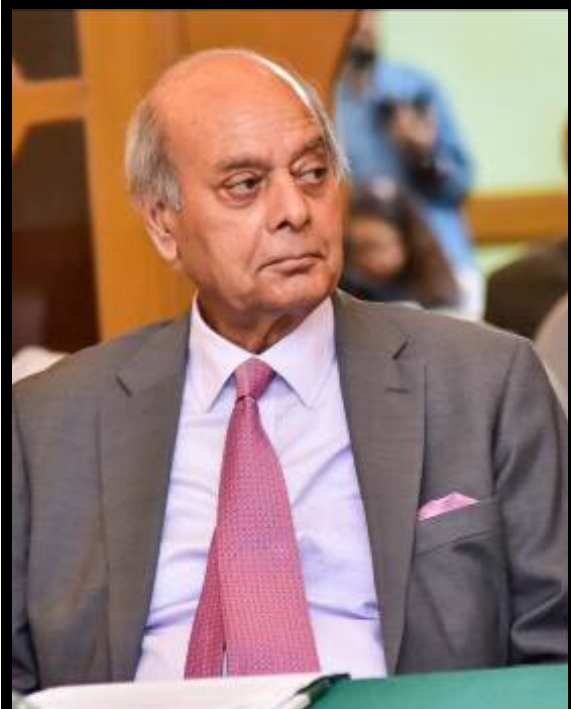
“In the first quarter of 2019, the number of cases reported to Sindh police were 65. In 2018, we recorded 113 cases. A total of 50 women were killed in the name of honour this year, while 28 men were also murdered following the result of honour killing,” said Mr Shaikh.

He also added that the Sindh Police has worked on the prevention of honour killing by forming an Anti-Honour Killing Crime Cell. The department had previously set up a database, trained over 2000 officers, developed a training manual, and also developed a separate manual for violence against women.

“The Department has recently formed Human Rights Cells, as well as Human Rights Desks in every district, along with a network on gender-based violence in collaboration with the civil society,” he said.

With respect to the police dealing with cases of honour killings Mr Shaikh stressed on the need for the components of criminal justice system to be developed in collaboration with different government departments and the civil society; while stressing the need for sensitisation of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.

## Justice (Retd) Shaiq Usmani - Former Chief Justice of Sindh court



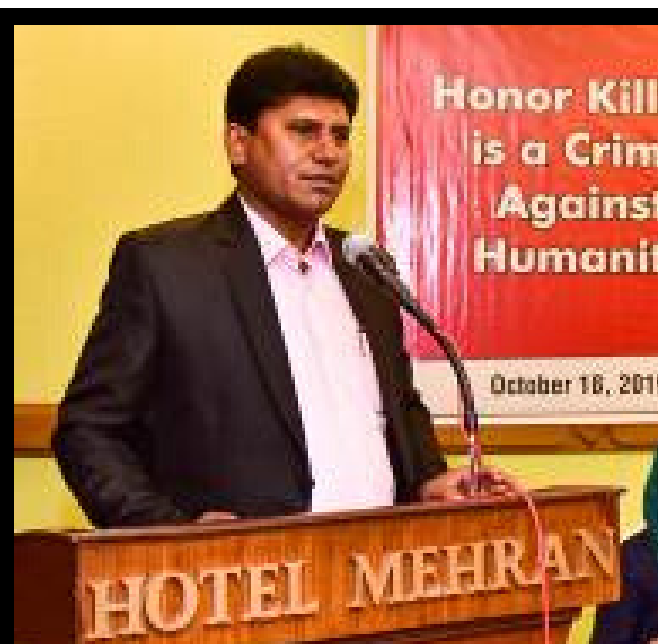
Justice (R) Shaiq Usmani spoke at the consultation on honour killings in Sindh

Former Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, Justice (Retd) Shaiq Usmani was also present at the occasion and shared that the consultation has gathered the most crucial stakeholders and must therefore gather useful and effective recommendations to curb honour killings in Sindh.

Talking about the cultural aspect of the crime he said, "Karo kari/honour killing is used to restrain women and deny them independence, which is their basic fundamental right," he said and added that it is only possible to address the issue through a change of mindset. He stated that an anti-honour killing law should be made to separately deal with this heinous crime. The formation of a separate commission or institution is also vital to deal with cases of karo kari/honour killings.

## Veerji Kohli — Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh on Human Rights

Mr Veerji Kohli participated as a panellist at the consultation as a representative of the Government of Sindh. During his brief speech he focused on how the cruelty of honour killing destroys the life of women who suffer in silence. He spoke about the case of a woman named Zubieda, who married someone out of her will and had to flee in order to save her own life, as well as that of her husband. He shared that the couple has a son.



Mr Kohli talks about PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto's vision to curb honour killing in Sindh

Later following a fatal accident, the husband died and the woman spent her days of youth as a widow and raised her son who grew to become a young man, and eventually killed his mother in the name of honour. It is awful how women are treated in our part of the world, where she is not even safe from her own son," he said.

Talking about the Sindh government's commitment to rally against karo kari/honour killing, Mr Kohli said that Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has given strict orders to the provincial administration to take effective action in cases of human rights, particularly those surrounding violence against women.

“We should join hands and devise a mechanism to deal with issues such as karo kari/honour killing. I would suggest making a committee to work towards eliminating honour killing from our province and also take experts like Ms Nafisa Shah on board.”

## **Closing remarks**

Towards the end of the consultation, Chairperson of Sindh Human Rights Commission, Justice (retd) Majida Razvi thanked everyone for their participation and also ensured that the Commission will continue to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses in the provinces, with a particular focus on honour killings and violence against women.

## **Recommendations from the Consultation**

Following is the list of recommendations shared by participants including panellists as well as audience member at the consultation:

- Integration of women protection systems at the district levels.
- Coordinated effort at the district and taluka level.
- Formation of police stations dedicated for women and children.
- Women development centres to be formed inside the women police stations.
- Statutory laws for protection centers for women/Dar-ul-amaans.
- Need for resource allocations to be done fairly.
- Need for quick remedy, where trials of relevant cases are concluded within a week's time.
- Need for integrated efforts.
- Social transformation of the society in the vulnerable regions.
- Outreach and accessibility of political parties in vulnerable areas.
- Various issues that surround violence against women must be thought through when strategizing policies and reforms surrounding the issue.
- Standalone trainings and workshops are not as effective. Therefore, relevant training of multiple stakeholders must be conducted by bringing them together under the same roof, so that they can
- brainstorm ideas and think of useful solutions.
- Image of the police needs to be worked on, as the society does not trust police as an institution. Therefore, the need for ownership is essential and work needs to be done at the grassroots level.
- Women must be equipped with education, which can further help them become financially independent.
- Capacity building and the need to strengthen institutions such as law enforcement agencies/personnel and medico-legal personnel must be looked into. The help of civil society must also be taken in this regard.



**Sindh Human Rights Commission  
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