

Pakistan's Foreign Policy

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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The bill for Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2020 has been introduced in the National Assembly by Ministry of Human Rights on 8th of July 2020, with the aim to 'establish an effective system of protection, relief and rehabilitation of women, children, elders and any vulnerable persons against domestic violence'.

The bill, which also extends to Islamabad Capital Territory, defines domestic violence as 'all acts of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse committed by a respondent against women, children, vulnerable persons, or any other person with whom the respondent is or has been in a domestic relationship that causes fear, physical or psychological harm to the aggrieved person.'

It includes, but is not limited to, acts such as repeated exhibition of possessiveness or jealousy which lead to invasion of privacy, liberty, integrity and security, threats of divorce or second marriage on baseless accusations or infertility, willful or negligent abandonment, stalking, harassment, or compelling the wife to cohabit with anybody other than the husband.

Situation in Pakistan:

A staggering 32 per cent of women have experienced physical violence in Pakistan and 40 per cent of ever-married women have suffered from spousal abuse at some point in their life.

Pakistan ranks as the sixth most dangerous country for women in regards to domestic violence. Patriarchal and cultural norms greatly impact women's rights in Pakistan. Honor killings and violence within the home are prevalent. Recently, social media model and activist Qandeel Baloch's brother strangled her to death.

An estimated 5000 women are killed per year from domestic violence, with thousands of others maimed or disabled. Women have reported attacks ranging from physical to psychological and sexual abuse from intimate partners.

Sentiment in Pakistan:

The Aurat March was a movement started to gain support for the prevention of violence and state-enabled violence against women in Pakistan. The March gained historical traction and was applauded by the international community as a major step towards improving the situation for the majority of women in Pakistan.