



28 May 2014 - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on Wednesday strongly condemned the killing of a 25-year-old pregnant woman, stoned to death by her family as she approached a Pakistani court on Tuesday, and urged the Government of Pakistan to do much more to prevent such killings.

“I am deeply shocked by the death of Farzana Parveen, who, as in the case of so many other women in Pakistan, was brutally murdered by members of her own family simply because she married a man of her own choice,” Pillay said. “I do not even wish to use the phrase ‘honour killing’: there is not the faintest vestige of honour in killing a woman in this way.” According to reports, some 20 members of Ms. Parveen’s family, including her father and two brothers, attacked her and her husband when they were on their way to the Lahore High Court, where they were due to contest her father’s allegations that she had been kidnapped by her husband and that their marriage was invalid.

□□ “Every year, hundreds of women are killed in Pakistan as a punishment for marrying a man their families have not chosen or for refusing an arranged marriage,” Pillay said. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 869 women were murdered in so-called ‘honour killings’ in the country last year, but the real figure could be much higher, with many such killings believed to be disguised as accidents, or not reported at all.

“The Pakistani Government must take urgent and strong measures to put an end to the

continuous stream of so-called ‘honour killings’ and other forms of violence against women,” the High Commissioner said. “They must also make a much greater effort to protect women like Farzana Parveen. The fact that she was killed on her way to court, shows a serious failure by the State to provide security for someone who – given how common such killings are in Pakistan -- was obviously at risk.” □

□ “People who carry out ‘honour crimes’ are rarely prosecuted, and even when they are, they often receive absurdly light sentences, considering they have committed pre-meditated murder,” Pillay said. “This is unacceptable, and it is clearly both the State’s and the judiciary’s responsibility to work seriously to deter such crimes, and ensure that people who commit them are brought to justice.” □

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which reviewed Pakistan’s record on women’s rights last year, expressed concern that despite the amended Criminal Law Act of 2004, which criminalizes offenses in the name of so-called honour, two Ordinances known as the Qisas and Diyat Ordinances continue to be applied in these cases. As a result, perpetrators are often given legal concessions, light sentences or are pardoned altogether. □

□ The UN Committee called on Pakistan to address shortcomings in the criminal law and to repeal all provisions under which perpetrators of so-called honour crimes are allowed to negotiate pardon with the victim's families. “Such provisions are particularly pernicious when members of the same family that conducted the killing are given the right to pardon the killers,” Pillay said.

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The UN General Assembly, in three separate resolutions in 2001, 2003 and 2005, called on Member States to intensify legislative, educational, social and other efforts to prevent and eliminate “honour”-based crimes, and to investigate promptly and thoroughly, prosecute effectively, and bring the perpetrators to justice. □ □ Pakistan has one of the highest rates of violence against women globally.