

Media Update

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PRESS RELEASE

Stand up for Equality

Role of judiciary and law enforcement agencies crucial to end violence against women and girls

Karachi: Role of judiciary and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) was pivotal for an effective implementation of existing laws to curb incidents of violence against women and girls. To end violence against women and girls, members of legal fraternity, LEAs, and civil society unanimously demanded action to enhance women participation in the judicial system and LEAs. They were speaking at two panel discussions of a dialogue on ‘stand up for equality – role of judiciary and law enforcement agencies to end violence against women and girls’ organized by UN Women, EVAWG (Ending Violence Against Women and Girls) Alliance and Legal Rights Forum (LRF) concluded late Thursday evening.

Giving opening remarks, Deputy Country Representative UN Women Pakistan Aisha Mukhtar said despite several national and international commitments on gender equality and women’s human rights, Pakistan’s ranking on gender equality remains one of the lowest in the world.

Prevalence of violence against women and girls have always remained high but cases are usually not reported. Aisha said that according to a study 52 percent of the women who experienced violence never sought help or ever told anyone about the violence they had experienced.

A lot of work has been done for legislative reforms at national and provincial level. However, Aisha stated, “Police officials lack appropriate training, knowledge, resources and attitudes to collect evidence, conduct medical examinations and make a sound case for prosecution. Among other issues with the justice sector, lack of court facilities and massive backlogs of



pending cases causing lengthy delays, and inadequate training and regulation of lawyers are some key challenges in providing justice to victims of violence.”

The panelists for a session on the role of police officials and civil society was moderated by Fozia Tariq, Advisor Police Reforms LRF, and participated by Anjum Iqbal, Additional Secretary Women Development Department Sindh, Dr. Raana Khan, Dean Faculty of Law at Dadabhoy Institute of Higher Education, Mehnaz Rehman, Resident Director Aurat Foundation, Sheeba Shah, SSP Prisons Central Jail Karachi, and Uzma Saeed, Sindh Police Officer. The second panel discussed on the role judiciary and prosecution was moderated by Hameeda Kaleem, Member Board of Directors LRF. Barrister Shahida Jamil, Former Federal Law Minister, Niaz Ahmed Siddiqui, former Inspector General of Sindh Police, Kalpina Devi, Additional Advocate General Sindh, Ayaz Ahmed Tonio, Prosecutor General Sindh, and Amer Saleem, General Secretary Karachi Bar Association were the panelists.

Executive Director LRF Tahir Iqbal said massive police reforms and speedy trials are important to control incidents of violence against women and girls. He said among 729 judges, from high court level to judicial magistrates in Sindh, there are only 100 women judges including one high court judge. Sindh has only 1973 women police personnel out of a total police force of 119626. Concrete actions are needed to include participation of women in judiciary and LEAs if we want to see an end to violence against women.

District and Session Judge Shahid Siddique gave concluding remarks. EVAW Alliance members from across Sindh, women rights activists, members of legal fraternity and civil society, government officials, and academia attended the event.
