**Honor Killings in Pakistan**

Worldwide, acts of violence against women targeted by their own families happen on a regular basis. The acts are committed in order to preserve the family honor. Many women live in fear that the smallest infraction will have them killed.

**Background**

In Pakistan, women are seen as the property of the men in their lives. They are expected to hold this traditional value and every aspect of their lives, even their own bodies and behaviors, is control by the men. So if they commit an act, or if a man suspects they did, that is seen to have brought shame to the family, the woman is put to death in order to remove shame and restore honor. In Pakistan, the practice is called *Karo-Kari*, with *karo* translating to “black man” and *kari* translating to “black woman”. The term is used to a name for those who committed actually or perceived acts of immoral behavior. Many of the perpetrators are family members of victim, mostly husbands or fathers. Perceived dishonors include suspected adultery or flirting, being raped, choosing their own husband, or being “too Western”. There is no place for the woman to go if she runs. She can commit herself into a hospital or prison for safety but she will not be able to leave unless a male relative comes for her. If she does run, often she lured back to her family, usually by her mother and it is then that she killed. The average age of the victims ranges from 15-25 years old but can happen at any age. Many incidents go unreported and, even if reported, the perpetrators go unpunished as the police are most often on the side of the man or family. [1, 3, 5, 8]

“In the name of preserving family ‘honour,’ women and girls are shot, stoned, burned, buried alive, strangled, smothered and knifed to death with horrifying regularity” [8]. Women are also raped, beaten, and have acid thrown in their faces prior to being killed. Although the honor killings in Pakistan are associated with Islam, honor killings are rooted in the traditional beliefs of the culture that predates Islam. Honor killings are seen in the Hindu religion, though the motives for killing differ between the religions. This suggests that the practice is more cultural rather than religion based. [2]

**The Intervention**

In Pakistan, the police have taken efforts to fight against the crime of honor killings. “The police have now set up an anti-karo-kari cell in four northern districts of Sindh Sukkur, Khairpur, Ghotki and Naushahro Feroz. The police have also set up a helpline… in anti-karo-kari cells established in the above districts” [7]. Training workshops have been implemented to make the police aware of the human rights issue and improve investigation methods, especially of honor crimes. Legislation changes have been suggested to have more severe punishment for those who commit these crimes and any accomplices. The main intervention must be aimed establishing human rights for the women and that honor killings is a violation of that right. [10]

**The Impact**

The interventions mentioned above either have not been put into action yet or have just recently put into practice. The effectiveness of this intervention has not been determined. Although new legislation has been discussed and debated, it has yet been put into action.

**Cost/Benefit**

The United Nations reports that yearly there are 5,000 deaths from honor killings. Unfortunately, this number may be an underestimated due to the fact this crime largely goes unreported. In Pakistan, at least 943 women were killed in 2011. The women who are not killed are tortured and left scarred for life. Cost to help this group would depend on donations and volunteers to organize and run shelters for the women while government intervention would also cost time and money for change. [1, 6, 8, 9]

**Lessons Learned**

Honor killings are not just a problem in Pakistan but also globally. The culture of the people view the women as property and therefore disposable. It also views family honor as more valuable than the lives of their daughters, wives, or mothers. Legislation and volunteer efforts had been made in the past and must continue if success is to happen. Nearly 5,000 women die unnecessarily each year from this practice and more to come if nothing is done. [5]

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