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## “The Commission on the Status of Women”

### *Topic B: “Honor Killing”*

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#### COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of the United Nations promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (UN). It is a United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) functional commission, which means it operates on its behalf and advises it on gender problems. The CSW plays an important role in promoting women's rights, recording the actuality of women's lives across the world, and defining worldwide standards on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) met for the first time in February 1947, shortly after the establishment of the United Nations. There were fifteen female representatives. The Commission was first sponsored by a United Nations institution. The CSW established close relationships with non-governmental organizations, with those with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) allowed to participate as observers.

DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI, and UNIFEM combined in 2011 to become UN Women, which is currently the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women.

## HISTORY OF TOPIC

### A. Introduction of the Topic:

Honor murders have been practiced since the time of the ancient Romans, when the father, or eldest male in a household, was granted the authority to kill an unmarried but sexually active daughter or a dishonest wife.

Historically, a murderer would "sprinkle his victim's blood on their clothing and walk around the streets exhibiting the gory murder weapon to raise his honour," gaining community admiration rather than condemnation for taking a life. In medieval Europe, an unfaithful woman and her lover were stoned to death under early Jewish law.

### B. Evolution of the Topic:

Currently, the practice is largely connected with the Middle East and North Africa. Most frequently, an honor killing occurs when male family members murder a female victim. The murderers defend their conduct by arguing that the victim has degraded the family name or prestige.

Religion and sexism are the two fundamental causes of the occurrence of honor killing. On one hand, honor-killing communities may share religious practices or beliefs, and religious precepts may appear to publicly condone or condemn honor-killing behaviors and desires. On the other hand, honor killing is unmistakably a kind of violence that restricts women's sexuality and social conduct, and so appears to fit into typical views of domestic violence as a form of sexist oppression. While religion and gender both play a part in justifying honor killing, none is adequate to fully explain the occurrence.

Honor killing is a clear demonstration of sexism. Girls' and women's actions are heavily scrutinized in patriarchal societies. It is stated that a woman's father, siblings, and ultimately her marriage preserve her virginity and "sexual purity." Having "sexually immoral" behavior, such as having sexual relations outside of marriage or having open relationships with persons who are not related to them, is the most common accusation brought against victims of honor killings (even if they are victims of rape or sexual assault).

However, a woman might be the target of a deadly attack for a variety of reasons, including not accepting an arranged marriage or demanding a split and divorce from an abusive spouse. An assault may be launched simply because a guy believes a woman has acted in a way that would ruin her family's reputation; these assumptions are often based upon men's feelings and perceptions rather than real facts. Female relatives, ironically, typically rationalize the atrocities and occasionally aid in their implementation.

However, in a concept of honor and shame, executing someone who has brought dishonor is honorable, whether it is right or wrong. Rape is abhorrent, but in a society based on honor and shame, rape is nothing more than humiliation, and those who are considered to bring shame face honor killing. The honor and shame paradigm also explains why, rather than murdering a rapist who has wronged a lady, the rape victim is slain. The heinous outcome is more important than the wrongdoing that resulted in it.

Despite the fact that such killings are sometimes believed of being underestimated, the United Nations Population Fund believes that up to 5,000 women are killed for honor each year. These atrocities take place all across the world and are not limited to one faith or creed. However, they

have happened in a significant and consistent manner in a number of Middle Eastern and South Asian regions, with Pakistan and India contributing to over half of all honor murders.

While gender equality has advanced in certain parts of the world, such as Western Europe, North America, and others, it is still prevalent in certain countries. Violence against women, in particular, remains a problem that deserves the attention of the international community. Violence against women is commonly entrenched in society. Because culture is so variable, finding solutions may be difficult, but not impossible.

## CURRENT ISSUES

### Pakistan:

In Pakistan, women face a wide range of horrific violence and brutality at the hands of male abusers, family members, and government authorities. Rape, spousal murder, mutilation, acid-burning and disfiguring faces, beatings, honor killings, and custodial abuse and torture are all types of violence.

Every year, hundreds of women of various ages and backgrounds are allegedly killed in Pakistan for the sake of honor. A large number of instances go unreported, and almost all of them go unpunished. Millions of Pakistan women's lives are hampered by cultural norms that require severe isolation and obedience to males, many of whom use violence to assert their nearly proprietorial rule over women. Women accept traditionally masculine control over all aspects of their bodies, speech, and actions as part of their kismet (destiny), but press coverage, the task of women's rights organizations, and increased mobility have all seen the emergence of women's rights consciousness seep into the secluded world of women.

However, when women try to use their rights, even cautiously, they are more likely to face persecution and sanctions: the rate of honor killings has grown in lockstep with the progress of rights awareness. The state's apathy, discriminatory legislation, and the majority of the nation's police and judges' gender discrimination have resulted in complete tolerance for individuals who commit honor murders.

#### India:

Despite the fact that the Indian government imposed harsh penalties for violence against women in the 1980s, honor murders remain a major issue in the country. Marriages centered on inter-caste and religious tolerance, on the other hand, persisted in rural regions, where they remained largely undiscovered due to direct or indirect support from local communities. When such homicides were reported, they were usually found to be an accident. Despite the fact that the lady suffered several wounds and could not have killed herself, a woman who was beaten, burnt, strangled, shot, or stabbed to death may be regarded as suicide.

#### Jordan:

Although Jordanian law does not recognize the words "explanation in the event of murder" under article 340, which deals with murder in compromising situations known as crime of adultery. In Jordan, culture and history have imposed the term "honor killing" to rationalize crimes committed in the name of honor. Honor killings, being murders, naturally fall within the category of crimes against individuals under Jordanian law, but they also fall under the category of mitigating factors in murder cases. In truth, Articles 98 and 340 of the Jordanian Penal Code give two explanations.

#### Afganistán:

Honor killings were common in Afghanistan both before and after the Taliban government. The practice dwindled during the rebuilding decade

following the US-led Iraq invasion in 2001. Nonetheless, cases of women being imprisoned in family cellars, female suicides, self-immolation, and so-called accidental deaths that appeared to be modified or masked forms of honor killing continued to be documented.

Afghanistan is first and primarily an "honor and shame society." Unlike many civilizations, Afghanistan's culture is mostly regulated by what is "honorable or shameful." People generally do not think or behave based on what is right or wrong, but rather on what would bring them honor or dishonor. In this country, honor is as important as life, and when it is lost (due to disgrace), the only way to regain it is through death. In terms of right and wrong, killing is absolutely wrong.

#### United Kingdom:

In the United Kingdom, laws were passed in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in November 2008 to prevent forced weddings and to give a route out for people currently in unwilling relationships. Anyone convicted of attempting to coerce someone into marriage might face up to two years in prison.

Despite the fact that this rule has been in place for a long time, according to HB VAN statistics, there are 12 honor killings in the UK each year. A renowned organization has warned that the police are failing victims of "honor" crimes, with just 5% of recorded instances being transferred to the Crown Prosecution Service. Furthermore, mistreated women are getting increasingly adept at identifying that what they are experiencing is abuse rather than "culture," and they are becoming more comfortable speaking up.

## **UN AND EXTERNAL ACTIONS**

### UN:

According to a recent study, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has recorded 183,132 actions to end violence against women.

UN agencies such as UNICEF seek to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in emergencies across the world. They prioritize the needs of girls and women, acknowledging their structural vulnerability to gender-based violence such as honor killings, while also ensuring care for all sexual assault survivors.

#### External Actions:

A separate law on honor killings is required to punish perpetrators while also rehabilitating and supporting afflicted families. The issue of harassment encountered by a young couple who desires to marry against the wishes of their relatives should be addressed by law. Most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are focusing on passing these legislations in order to prevent future disasters.

### **CONCLUSION**

In actuality, honor killings are the result of various factors. They've been studied from several angles, including social, psychological, legal, cultural, anthropological, and even economic.

Indeed, the killing of a woman accused of sullyng her family's honor by a member of her family in order to restore that honor is the "visible tip of an iceberg" that depends on a number of cultural factors. These traits form the foundation of a sexist society that generates, reproduces, justifies, and accepts violence against women. As a result, femicide is the culmination of a series of micro-violences, and its justification by restoring family - or tribal - honor damaged by a woman demonstrates a gender imbalance in the task.

It is shameful that the term honor is being used to describe such heinous conduct. Those who enjoy these atrocities should be embarrassed, not proud. Women are given the liberty and freedom to make their own life choices everywhere throughout the world.

The moment has come to put a stop to such violence against women. It's shocking that women with such little social status and no family have become the central focus of a false and poorly maintained concept of family honor, which they are supposed to keep at the price of their own desires and preferences.

### IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- Can the UN (or other global agency) convince countries to reform their systems of law so that honor killings are considered the same as any other murder? Could this be done through legal procedures or by other methods?
- Is your country capable of preventing honor killings?
- While more legal limits would assist, is there any way to stop honor killings from their origin, by educating and redefining what "honor" truly means, in order to educate those who might otherwise be future victims?
- How might your nation modify the way honor killings are recorded and calculated?
- How can CSW assure better accuracy in this sector with uncertain numbers owing to underreporting and false allegations made by victims' relatives as to how a murder occurred, as well as law enforcement not keeping accurate records of honor killings?



## RESOURCES

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