

25th August 2008

Women's Action Forum Press Release 25 August 2008

Women's Action Forum is deeply concerned at the growing challenges to the writ of the state being mounted by parallel systems imposing brutal punishments. WAF is horrified that 5 women were brutally shot and then buried alive in Balochistan for trying to exercise their fundamental right to determine their lives. We are appalled that the brother of a sitting Minister of the Balochistan government (Minister for Housing, Mir Sadiq Umrani) is directly involved. WAF appreciates the *suo motto* notice taken by the Quetta High Court and hopes the court acts to ensure swift justice. WAF demands that all the perpetrators in this heinous crime be caught and punished: those who pulled the triggers and those who arranged the killing; and the leaders of the Umrani tribe be held accountable. The state and our elected representatives must take responsibility to ensure that such inhuman, cruel and criminal actions never take place again.

WAF is deeply distressed that violence in the pursuit of power is becoming a norm in Pakistan impacting the vulnerable including targeted attacks on individual women such as the two women whose mutilated and disfigured bodies were recently found in Nanguman on Charsadda Road. Both incidents highlight the specific targeting and terrorizing of women. The owning of these murders by criminal elements in Bajaur, the bombing of at least 123 girls' schools in the north and the constant threats issued by armed militants are all part of the Talibanisation project aimed at absolute power that suffocates women. This denies rights and further narrows the spaces guaranteed for women by the Pakistan state in 1947.

WAF has consistently been raising the issue of Talibanisation that threatens the very fabric of society and the integrity of the state. This is a major challenge to Pakistan along with growing poverty, rampant inflation and the lack of justice. Political parties must rise above their personal agendas to simultaneously address all these urgent issues. WAF calls upon all Pakistanis to hold their elected representatives accountable.