WOMENS POLICE STATIONS

Members of womens organisations had a preliminary exchange of views with the IG Police on 13th November, 1993 in connection with the proposed setting up five police stations in Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi.

The members of the delegation impressed upon the IG Police that it had been a long standing demand of women that the government and security forces should take active measures to reduce the alarming increase in violence against women which includes the harassment and molestation of women in police custody. It is also, our belief that while discriminatory laws like Hudood Ordinance and Qasas and Diyat are on the statute books the incidence of crimes against women will not abate. The delegation was informed by the IG Police of some of the constraints faced by the police which primarily included the absence of a trained female police force in enough numbers to tackle the problem.

The scheme for the setting up of special women police stations must not in any way undermine the importance of stronger monitoring procedures for all structures of the law enforcement agencies, and specially at the level of police station and other interrogation centres. We must recognize that women cannot be segregated within the criminal justice process, their continuing presence in standard police stations must be acknowledged. Therefore, procedures ensuring the prevention of violation of womens' right to personal security should not be ignored even at that level.

In the light of the preliminary exchange the womens' organisations have proposed that:

1) There should be special cells headed by a woman police-officer of the rank of DSP in every thana. Until such times as this is not possible the 5 proposed centres should be headed by SPs and have their own judicial lockups.

2) Women reporting crimes or brought in for investigation should be informed of the existence of the female police stations and be given the option of being investigated in either thana.

3) Special categories of offences such as rape, stove burning and battering must be investigated by women police.

4) Women accused must not be kept in lockups overnight but produced before a magistrate and sent directly to jail.

5) There must be a police surgeon/doctor available to examine women at each female police station and all women must either be taken to the station if access is possible or to the District Hospital for examination by a female surgeon. Each examination must be voluntary and a statement to that effect must be made by the complainant/accused.

6) Recruitment for female police must be opened and publicised through the media.

7) Until such time as trained women police at officer level is not available there should be lateral entry at the ASP level as is done in Bangladesh and India and existing officers must be promoted. The officer staff of the women police force must be examined in order to identify appropriate personnel for promotion.

8) There should be training programmes for the female police force on an emergency basis and women and human rights NGO's must be associated with these programmes.

9) NGO's should be involved in monitering/evaluating the work of women police stations.

10) There should be a publicity blitz regarding women issues on all existing media.