

Web Action WA 47/06; AI Index ASA 33/048/2006

Start date: 25/11/06
Web Publisher Category: (eg SVAW)

Pakistan

Panah needs your support

“He used cords, wires and sticks to beat me. He always beat me on the head, that way the wounds were never seen.” – A woman speaking to Amnesty International in Karachi, 2004

An estimated 80 per cent of all Pakistani women suffer violence in the home, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases of “honour” killings, acid burning, rape, incest, mutilations (including cutting off the nose and breasts), severe verbal abuse and economic deprivation.

Some of these women end up at Panah – literally “shelter” – where they have access to free legal aid, medical care and counselling. Panah was set up by Amnesty International members who, upon reading the organization’s 1999 report *Pakistan: violence against women in the name of honour* (ASA 33/018/1999), offered money to help women caught in such situations.

Over the years, Panah has offered a safe haven to over 250 women. Not only are they provided immediate sanctuary, but they are also given vocational and educational training to help them gain the skills they need to be self-sufficient.

Panah is one of the few shelters for women in Pakistan. Although the government is now creating new crisis centres, and although there are some state- and private-funded shelters for women in some cities, their numbers are wholly inadequate.

“Divorce is a taboo in our society but I knew my rights as a woman. I went ahead with it only to wear a ‘just divorced - mentally unsound’ label. After confinement in a psychiatric hospital, I gathered my inner strength and courage to contact two NGO’s working in the city. Here in Panah with professional medical help, I am picking up the threads of a torn, tattered and traumatic episode”. - A 27-year-old woman who sought refuge at Panah

[Call to action]

The Panah shelter is looking for a new home – its current premises have been requested back by the owners. Panah needs to move to a safe and affordable location by the end of 2007. The fate of the women who remain on the premises must not be jeopardized.

[Target contact details]

You can help make a difference. Find out how by contacting the: Pakistan Team, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, Email: pkteam@amnesty.org inserting “16 days of activism” in the subject line.

Field Code Ch

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