Karo Kari - Honor Killing

The menace of Karo-Kari has been a subject of wider debate by human rights activists in Pakistan. This is a homicide and has also been described as 'trans cultural homicide' because of its relation to specific cultures.

Karo-Kari is a compound word, which means a 'black male' and 'black female', respectively. These are metaphoric terms for those who commit illicit pre-marital or extra-marital relations. A Karo-Kari act is initiated when a female is labeled as a Kari because of the perceived dishonor that she had brought to the family by being in an illicit relationship with a man who is subsequently labeled as a 'Karo'. Once labeled as a Kari, male family members get the self-authorized justification to kill her and the co-accused Karo to restore family honor.

Precise figures are hard to obtain, especially for the more remote rural and tribal areas; but Pakistan is thought to hold the world record in honor crimes. This can be further explained on the basis of low literacy, moral freedom and limited insight about ethical and religious values.

Baluchistan does not have a vibrant middle class nor does it have an active civil society. The media is too restricted and operates low profile, with the intention of not to offend the government and the tribal chiefs. Talking about the murder of women in the name of honor is still widely considered taboo while those who speak a word of sympathy for the victims of such killings are by and large branded as “shameless” people who oppose the “deserving death punishment” for a girl who brings shame to the name of her respectful family.

In one recent incident in August 2008, the Asian Human Rights Commission reported that five women (including three teenagers) in a remote village had been beaten, shot and buried alive in a ditch for the crime of seeking to choose their own husbands. After human rights activists brought the case to national and international attention, Israr Ullah Zehri, who represents Baluchistan in the Pakistani Parliament, defended the killings and asked his fellow legislators not to make a fuss about the incident. He told Parliament, "These are centuries-old traditions, and I will continue to defend them. Only those who indulge in immoral acts should be afraid." But many Baloch literate are against the horrific crimes which took place in Baluchistan. Many Baloch or Balochis have denied the fact that Karo Kari is part of Balochi culture. They claim it was a nomadic cultural practice which was stopped many years ago, but because of poor administration by the Pakistani government and to demilitarize the Baloch, such acts are now taking place.