



National Association of Women Lawyers®

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September 27, 2005

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz
c/o His Excellency Ambassador Jehangir Karamat
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
3517 International Court, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Re: Dr. Shazia Khalid

Dear Prime Minister Aziz:

I am writing you on behalf of the National Association of Women Lawyers ("NAWL"), a leading voluntary association of women lawyers based in the United States. In cooperation with women's coalitions around the world, NAWL works toward the social, political, and professional empowerment of women, seeks to end discrimination and violence against women and to prevent the erosion of hard-fought gains.

I write to urge you and your government to ensure that Dr. Shazia Khalid is treated in accordance with international legal standards. Dr. Khalid is a victim of a heinous crime, yet she has been forced to endure continued hardship from fellow Pakistanis and the very government created to protect her. While her rapists have not been prosecuted, Dr. Khalid was placed under virtual house arrest, admitted into a psychiatric hospital and initially prohibited from leaving Pakistan. Following this, she and her husband were forced to leave Pakistan without their son and are currently in exile in London. Dr. Khalid has continued to be punished although she has committed no crime. I ask you to take steps to appropriately prosecute her rapists as the law requires and to allow her to return to Pakistan if she so desires. I also request that you allow her son to travel abroad like any other Pakistani citizen, free from harassment or discrimination.

Dr. Khalid is not alone in her suffering. Many Pakistani women experience sexual and other violence, particularly in rural Pakistan where women are subject to local discriminatory traditions and refused legal protection. Under *karo-kari*, or honor killing, women are considered property and raped as punishment for others' crimes with the expectation that they will commit suicide. Alternatively, women are murdered for "dishonoring" their

families, often at the hands of their own family members. According to *The New York Times*, a woman in Pakistan is raped every two hours and two women each day die from so-called honor killings.¹ Women who report rapes are subject to hudood laws, requiring them to produce four Muslim men who witnessed the rape. This is a virtually impossible task and as a result, women who report rapes are punished and, it is reported, often murdered. These laws discriminate against women, in violation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It is imperative that *karo-kari*, hudood laws and other similar practices are outlawed.

Moreover, it is crucial to recognize that those who experience sexual violence are not opportunists seeking money or visas to other countries. They are victims of a crime under international law. I ask that you take steps to prevent sexual violence and protect victims and punish the assailants as the law requires.

Sincerely,

Stephanie E. Masker
Co-Chair, NAWL International Committee

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¹ Nicholas D. Kirstof, *The 11-Year-Old Wife*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, June 21, 2005, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/21/opinion/21kristof.html?hp>.