



# SAUTE-E-NISWAN

The Voice of Women

## National Commission on the Status of Women

NEWSLETTER FOR JAN. TO MARCH, 2011

ISSUE-5

### Inside this Issue

Editorial	1
Candlelight Vigil for Late Salman Taseer	2
Meeting with Prime Minister	2
Commemoration of National Women's Day	2
Brainstorming /dialogue on Blasphemy Law	3
Framing A Policy Framework for Women's Equal Rights	4
Update on NCSW's Implementation Watch Committee	4
Seminar on "Muslim Women: Through Lens of History, Religion, Law, & Society"	6
Review and Recommendations on Acid Crimes Bill	6
National Conference on "Women as Change Agents in Coping with Climate Change"	7
National Consultation on 'Administrative Changes after 18th Amendment	7
Follow up of Aisha Murder Case in Punjab	8
Chairperson and Member NCSW attend UNCSW Summit in New York	8
Presentation of 3 years Strategic Plan of NCSW	8
NCSW Press Releases	9

### EDITORIAL

The year was only a few days old when the shocking and horrific news of the assassination of Mr Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab, stunned the nation. His was killed for supporting a poor Christian woman who had been accused of committing blasphemy, a law which has being misused to persecute

The nation expects the Parliament to take immediate notice of the Asiya Bibi case, ensure that the assassins are brought to justice without further delay and safeguards the rights and lives of religious minorities as enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. Battling bureaucratic hurdles, the NCSW

### NCSW CONTINUED IN ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL AUTONOMY

and harass people especially religious minorities. The acclaim and appreciation showered on his assassin by some lawyers further tarnished the image of the country. Salman Taseer's senseless murder was followed by another brutal assassination, that of Mr Shahbaz Bhatti, Federal Minister for Minorities. These tragic events caused the Asiya Bibi case to be pushed to the background, so that no one is now willing to even mention her name, while she languishes in jail. NCSW together with human rights activists, women parliamentarians, political workers and citizens from different walks of life broke the threatening silence and registered their strong protest at these tragic happenings.



Unfortunately, the Parliament has been quiet on the issue. Ms. Sherry Rehman was the only one who had the courage to speak up.

continued in its efforts to achieve administrative and financial autonomy so that it could function effectively as a watch dog body as per its mandate. Its Law Committee examined laws to protect women and strengthen their legal rights, drafted appropriate legislation and presented it to the National Assembly's Standing Committee for Women's Development for consideration. The Commission took note of the monumental step taken by Parliament in the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment to strengthen democracy and the Federation and devolve subjects to the provinces, and organized a briefing session

on its implications for women. Details about these and some other events and activities during the first three months of the year are briefly described in this short newsletter.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

### A CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR SALMAN TASEER



Together with colleagues from the civil society network the Insani Huqooq Itehad, women members of parliament and citizens of Islamabad, NCSW members attended a protest demonstration and candle light vigil on 5th January at the Kohsar Market

in Islamabad where Salman Taseer had been assassinated the previous afternoon. The demonstration by at least 200 people served to break the threatening atmosphere of fear that had gripped the city.

### MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN

*The Prime Minister instructed that the amendments should be implemented before the forthcoming International Women's Day on 8 March 2011.*

Members of the National Commission on the Status of women led by Chairperson Ms. Anis Haroon, met the Prime Minister, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, on 10<sup>th</sup> February and apprised him of the difficulties being faced by the Commission. Ms. Anis Haroon said that since 2003 the NCSW had been trying to institute amendments in the NCSW Ordinance in order to make it an autonomous body, so that the Commission could perform its responsibilities as per its mandate and bring it at par with other such

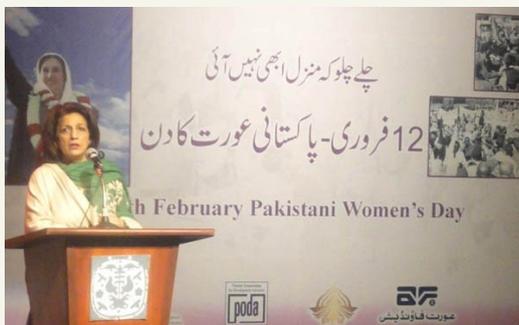
Commission around the world. But in spite of its best efforts, the clear directives from the Prime Minister and the political commitment of PPP government that the NCSW should be given full financial and administrative autonomy; bureaucratic hurdles were still holding up implementation. The Prime Minister instructed the concerned officials to ensure that the amendments should be implemented before the forthcoming International Women's Day on 8 March.

The Commission also presented its Annual Report to the Prime Minister with highlights of its recommendations, which included that the recent elections held in Shangla Kohistan should be declared null and void because women had been prevented from voting; and that the judgment by the Federal Shariat Court that sought to undo the positive aspects of the Women's Protection Act 2006 should be challenged by the government of Pakistan.

### COMMEMORATION OF NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In the year 2009, the Government of Pakistan had officially declared February 12 as National Women's Day. February 12th is marked each year by women activists across the country to commemorate February 12, 1983, when women under the banner of the Women's Action Forum and the Punjab Women Lawyers Association protested in Lahore and successfully challenged the promulgation of the Law of Evidence by the military dictator Ziaul Haq. The women protestors were baton charged and

arrested by the police in Lahore. This barbarism by the state against



peaceful women protesters and their male supporters was an important

milestone in the history of women's movement in Pakistan.

The National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) in collaboration with the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy, Aurat Foundation and Pakistan Television commemorated Pakistani Women's Day. The ceremony was attended by a large number of students and women and men from different walks of life. *Chalay Chalo Ki Manzil Abhi Nahe Aye* was the theme chosen as a pledge to continue the struggle for justice for



women and gender equality. Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Ms. Samina Khan, Ms Zahida Hina, Mr Salman Raja, Ms Nasreen Azhar and Ms Anis Haroon were the main speakers at the event. Ms Shabnam Shakil and Ms Rehana Toufiq recited their poems that were much appreciated by the audience. The well known singer, Ms Fareeha Pervez enthralled the audience with her melodious rendering of poems by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. The speakers criticized the judgment by the Federal Shariat

Court that sort to undo the protection given to women by the Women's Protection Act 2006 and asked Government and civil society organizations to challenge it in the Supreme Court. The event provided an opportunity for some courageous women to come forward and share their struggles and success stories.

The following five women were awarded with shields for their valuable contribution to the rights of women in the fields of legislation, education, sports, fighting patriarchal

practices, and courage to stand up against injustice.

1. Ms. Mukhtara Mai as Symbol of Resistance Against Violence
2. Ms. Samar Minallah for Challenging Patriarchal Practices
3. Ms. Naseem Hameed the Youth Achievement Award
4. Ms. Rukhshanda Naz for Lifetime Struggle for Legal Rights
5. Ms. Bushra Arain for Collective Rights of Lady Health Workers

### BRAINSTORMING AND DIALOGUE ON BLASPHEMY LAW

*Several conflicting views and misunderstandings prevail in society about these laws that are serving to fuel intolerance and militancy.*

Following the tragic assassination of the Governor of Punjab Mr Salman Taseer for criticizing the Blasphemy Law and speaking out in support of Asiya Bibi, the National Commission on the Status of Women organized an experience sharing and brain storming session on the subject of the controversial law. Several conflicting views and misunderstandings prevail in society about these laws that are serving to fuel intolerance and militancy. Innocent citizens, women and men from the minority and majority communities, have been targeted. Many have been killed while their case was still being heard. Others have been forced to flee their homes and their lives and security threatened. The tragic assassination of the Governor, and the public support for his assassin by some lawyers sent shock waves across the

country. NCSW felt that there was an urgent need for people from different walks of life to come together and



a find a way forward to deal with the growing lawlessness in the name of religion. Legislators, especially women legislators, senior media persons and members of civil society were invited to debate the issue and share their experiences. The well know legal expert Ms Hina Jillani and religious scholar Dr Khalid Masood were invited to respond to queries and concerns. A video documentary that covered the history of the Blasphemy Law, highlighted some cases and offered concrete recommendations, was shown to the participants. The session was well attended by representatives of

media and parliamentarians. After a thorough and intense debate, it was agreed that there were several misun-

derstandings and a general lack of information about the law and a need for rational debate. Some points of agree-

ment were:

- The Blasphemy Law should be translated in Urdu and shared with the media
- No one should be allowed to take the law into his own hands
- No one should be allowed to issue *fatwas* accusing a person to be a non-Muslim
- The law against Incitement to Violence should be used to register cases against all those religious leaders who issued *fatwas* and announced head money for encouraging murder
- Awareness sessions



should be organized for parliamentarians to promote understanding about the Blasphemy Laws

- NCSW should form an experts' pool to counter the arguments of religious groups on religious grounds

- The licenses of all those lawyers who showered rose petals on Salman Taseer's murderer must be cancelled
- Civil society must build pressure on the government to take stern action against religious

leaders and people who incite violence

- There is a need to move towards a national debate so that people do not misinterpret Islam and use it for promoting their political and personal agendas

### FRAMING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN'S EQUAL RIGHTS

The National Commission on the Status of Women commissioned a scoping study in order to identify and scrutinize prevailing gender discriminatory policies. The purpose of the study was to review the policies that perpetuate gender inequality in the country, and recommend amendments and changes to reverse the adverse impact of such policies. The study highlights critical and current concerns that inform policy

content and suggests ways of gendering the policy-making process. The main value of this study is twofold; first, it attempts to locate policy concerns that are derived from the specific issues faced by Pakistani women; secondly, it focuses on current policy concerns rather than outlining long-term visionary goals for gender equality. In other words, the NCSW intends this study to

be used as a live document drafted in a local framework, rather than an international one. It offers guidelines in approaching, understanding and rethinking gendered policy in the immediate timeframe for policy makers and other stakeholders, especially at provincial level.

*The Study attempts to locate policy concerns that are derived from the specific issues faced by Pakistani Women;*

### MEETING OF NCSW'S IMPLEMENTATION WATCH COMMITTEE ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE ACT

*Ms. Musarat Hilali, had been appointed as the first Woman's Ombudsperson for the Federal Area.*

The fourth meeting of the Implementation Watch Committee set up by the National Commission for the Status of Women, which has been formed to ensure implementation on the Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment and the related anti sexual harassment laws in the PPC, appreciated the Higher Education Commission for its efforts to institutionalize mechanisms in universities to combat sexual harassment.

The HEC had been working on a draft policy for several months under a task force chaired by Ms

Najma Najam, Vice Chancellor, Karakoram University. This policy was finalized in the light of the recent legislation and sent to all universities to comply with.

Chairperson of the Implementation Watch Committee and NCSW Member, Dr Fouzia Saeed, reported this positive development and informed participants about the PM's announcement that the well known lawyer and human rights activist from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms. Musarat Hilali, had been appointed as the first woman's Ombudsperson for the Federal Area. She stressed that the provinces now needed to



appoint their Ombudspersons under this law for working women in each province. Mussarat Hilali was at the meeting as a special guest.

Sajjad Sipra, the head of Women and Development Department, Punjab, presented the progress made by the Punjab Government. He assured the Committee that the Department was institutionalizing the Code of Conduct and was conducting trainings to sensitize the people.

Maliha Hussain reported on the level of implementation through the regulatory bodies. She said most of them have notified the organizations working under them,

however a reminder needed to be sent out for more speedy compliance. Ms. Rukhsana Rehman, Joint Secretary, Administration, Establishment Division, felt that dissemination of information about the law needed to be circulated again and again for internalization of the mechanism.

Television channels were especially identified as going slow in terms of compliance. So far the Committee had information from GEO, DAWN, NEWS and Express on forming Committees.

Dr. Fouzia Saeed also reported that the rules concerning the legislation, Protection of Women Against Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 had

been approved. She said that usually it took anywhere from one to three years for this process to be completed, but follow up by the Implementation Committee had made it happen within a year.

The future plans of the Committee include visits to the provinces to request them to appoint provincial Ombudspersons as required by the law. It was also decided to focus on the Health and Education Ministries, as there were a large number of women employees serving in these ministries, and facilitate them in setting up mechanisms to deal with sexual harassment.

UPDATE ON REGULATORY BODIES AND KEY ORGANIZATIONS

The following regulatory bodies and key organizations have issued notifications regarding compliance with the anti sexual harassment legislation to organizations working under them.

- **Prime Minister Secretariat** to all the federal ministries and government bodies, in April 2010
- **Inspector Generals of Police** to their respective police departments
- **Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce (FPCCI)** to all its member chambers on 15th July, 2010

- **State Bank of Pakistan** to all banks regulated by it on 23rd August 2010
- **Federal Ministry of Education** to all departments and functionaries on 15th Sep. 2010
- **Ministry of Health** to all hospitals, medical institutes, attached departments, sub-ordinate offices and autonomous bodies on 20th September 2010
- **Pakistan Electronic Media Authority (PEMRA)** to all TV and Radio Channels and Cable Operators on 12th

October 2010

- **Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)** to all telecom companies on 05th November 2010
- **Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA)** to all Oil and Gas companies and CNG stations on 24th November 2010
- **Higher Education Commission (HEC)** to all its affiliated universities on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2011.



## SEMINAR ON “MUSLIM WOMEN: THROUGH THE LENS OF HISTORY, RELIGION, LAW, AND SOCIETY”

### Abstract of talk delivered at CBEC Seminar by Chairperson, NCSW

The years 2007--2010 have witnessed a number of tragic incidents in Pakistan owing to the rise of religious extremism. A two-fold threat was being experienced by people in Pakistan: on one hand the growing Taliban philosophy was propagating an extremist fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, and on the other, the ‘war against terror’ was displacing millions of families within the country. Little or no preparatory measures had been taken for their rehabilitation. Women were the worst sufferers and the most disadvantaged in both the developments. The misogynist principles of Talibinisation have manifested themselves in incidents such as the brutal flogging of women in Swat, and a number of heinous murders, such as of the dancing girls Shehnaz and Shabana. In addi-

tion to the increasing Talibinisation, women were still facing human rights issues that have marked their history since the inception of Pakistan, including ‘judgments’ imposed by *jirgas* and *panchayats* and honor killings.

The major violations of women’s rights during recent times began with the so-called Islamisation process of late General Zia-ul-Haq. Discriminatory laws introduced by him, including the Hudood Ordinance, Qisas and Diyat law and the Law of Evidence, and the Citizenship Act, the laws of Custody and Guardianship, and family laws in general, continue to put women at a disadvantage legally and socially.

The State’s continued lack of commitment to pro-actively removing alternative, parallel non-state judicial systems has resulted in blatant violations and reversal of women’s human rights with impu-

nity. Under false excuses of customs, traditions, and arbitrary interpretations of religion, women’s rights to impartial and constitutional legal recourse are sacrificed and bartered in order to uphold and serve community and familial male interests.

Most recently, the Federal Shariat Court, while keeping its eyes closed to the reality on the ground, has ruled that sections of the Women Protection Act (2006), among other legislation, violates the Constitution, and has given the Government till June 2011 to remove “the flaws.” Many Islamic Laws in their literalist application neglect to take into account the social conditions within which these laws have to be applied.

## REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACID CRIMES BILL

The NCSW Law Committee of legal experts reviewed three different versions of Acid Crimes bills. One version came from Ms Marvi Memon; the second was drafted by Justice (R) Fakhrunnisa; and the third bill had been put together by the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) after a consultative process with civil society organizations and women activists. Recommendations made by the NCSW on the Marvi Memon and Justice (R) Fakhrunnisa bills were presented to the NA Standing Committee on Women’s Development and were incorpo-

rated; while the ASF draft was reviewed in detail and finalized, and sent to MoWD to be tabled as a separate government bill.

The comprehensive bill as finalized took into account expenses for the treatment for acid burns and reconstructive surgery, an expensive process that few victims can afford. The bill proposes a comprehensive mechanism for the medical treatment, rehabilitation and compensation of victims as part of the new law. It was suggested that the bill

may be split into two parts, one to do with changes in the Pakistan Penal Code which the Federal Government could immediately legislate; and the other a more comprehensive law to be introduced in the provinces after devolution under 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment had been completed.



## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS IN COPING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE"

A National Conference was organized in partnership with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the International Labor Organization (ILO) on *Women as Change Agents in Coping with Climate Change* on March 10th, 2011. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Nadeem Ahmad, Chairman NDMA, representatives of the Ministry of Environment and the Norwegian Embassy, government officials, members of civil society working in the field of environment, representatives of NGOs and INGOs and students from different universities attended the conference.

Speakers highlighted how women can and were contributing as change agents in protecting the environment and coping with climate change. According to the Chairman of NDMA, women were playing a vital role to cope with the climate change all over the world. They included not only educated or urban women but also rural and uneducated women. He said



women seemed to be more aware and sensitized about contemporary environment issues, and women were also more vulnerable during disasters. Hence the active participation of women in environment policies was essential.

Chairperson NCSW Ms Anis Haroon said that climate change was a global phenomenon not exclusive to Pakistan. There was an urgent need to mainstream women in development schemes and ensure their participation in decision-making. She stressed that women were catalysts of change and

they must play a proactive role for mitigation of the effects of disasters on society.

Minister Councilor of the Norwegian Embassy in Pakistan Mr Terej Barstad, assured that Norway would extend support for gender based projects in Pakistan for self-reliance of women. Mr. Kamran Ali Qureshi from the Ministry of Environment appreciated the participation of a large number of women from different areas of the country and invited them to share their ideas on halting climate change protecting the environment. Women from cities and villages who are actively engaged in sustainable practices to reclaim the environment and prevent its degradation described their initiatives and shared their experience.

## NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON: 'ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES AFTER 18TH AMENDMENT AND PROVINCIAL/ REGIONAL GENDER POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN KEY DEPARTMENTS'

A consultative meeting was organized on March 29 to discuss the implementation process for the 18th Constitutional Amendment and its implications from a gender perspective.

The Secretary Interprovincial Coordination Committee for the long awaited devolution of power from the Federal Government to the provinces briefed participants about the devolution process and roles and responsibilities of key players at the provincial and regional level, especially implications for legislation concerning women's rights. Women's Ministers from the provinces, provincial secretaries and civil society representatives participated in the consultation. The meeting also

took up issues regarding the prevailing gender discriminatory policies identified in NCSWs' detailed research study conducted last year. The study had reviewed policies that perpetuate gender inequality and suggested recommendations. The study specifically focused on policies for labour, education, health, social protection, family laws, violence against women, and conflict and security issues.

The study is an attempt to locate policy concerns that are derived from the specific issues faced by Pakistani women with a focus on current policy concerns, rather than outlining long-term visionary goals for gender equality.

It was stressed that this study should be used as a live document drafted in a local framework rather than an international one, offering guidelines to approach, understanding and rethinking of gender policy in the immediate time-frame for policy makers and other stakeholder.

The study was completed before the passage of the 18th Amendment, but since then the situation had totally changed it was stressed that urgent consultations were required with the relevant policy makers from all provinces and regions, including Gilgit Baltistan, AJK and FATA to end the prevailing structural gender inequalities and violence against women.



## A LETTER TO CM AND IG PUNJAB IN AISHA MURDER CASE

The NCSW received an application submitted by a complainant, Ms Farzana Bibi d/o Mst. Ghulam Ayesha and Ghulam Abbas, caste Bhatti and a resident of 63/DP, Tehsil Yazman, District Bahawalpur. The complainant said that her mother Mst. Ghulam Ayesha had been brutally beaten to death in police custody by SHO Mr Iqbal Janar, of Police Station Marrot, Tehsil Fort Abbas, District Bahawalnagar.

A case study of this brutal incident of violence revealed that there was a quarrel sparked by a petty issue between two close members of the family. Ironically, the information about the brawl reached the said police station and resulted in Mst. Ghulam Ayesha being brutally beaten and killed by the police.

The NCSW strongly urged the Chief Minister Punjab and IG Punjab to take immediate no-

tice of the case, and to direct the relevant authorities to initiate proper investigation and take stern action against the said SHO. The NCSW also asked both the officers to apprise the Commission of the details of the case and action taken. The response was subsequently received and it was found out that the cause of Ghulam Ayesha's death was heart attack not beating by the police.

*NCSW strongly urged Chief Minister and IG Punjab to take stern action against the said SHO.*

## CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBER NCSW ATTEND UNCSW SUMMIT IN NEW YORK

*Chairperson reiterated the commitment of the Commission to go beyond its mandate to work for the promotion and protection of women's rights*

NCSW Chairperson Ms Anis Haroon and Member from Islamabad Ms Raashda Anwar attended the 55th session of UNCSW recently held in New York. The Chairperson made a detailed presentation on achievements regarding the condition and status of women in the public and private spheres and also the challenges still being faced by them in Pakistan. She read

out a statement on behalf of the delegation appreciating the initiatives taken by the present government for the economic, social and legal empowerment of women in the country and highlighted discriminatory laws and policies that were affecting and undermining the rights of women and minorities in the country. The Chairperson reiterated the commitment of the

Commission to go beyond its mandate to work for the promotion and protection of women's rights at all the levels together with all stakeholders. On behalf of her country she welcomed the newly created entity in the United Nations, UN Women, and assured cooperation and support in implementing its policies for women's empowerment and gender equality.

## PRESENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN TO DONORS

National Commission on the Status of Women's three-year strategic plan was presented to UNWOMEN and The Asia Foundation for financial and technical collaboration. The document builds on efforts made to date to address issues and highlight concerns for women's development and empowerment through the many crises that the nation has endured, but much still remains to be done in view of the many existing and emerging challenges faced by women. The plan clearly identifies specific priority areas that need to be immediately addressed as well as long standing cross cutting issues, and outlines

possible effective interventions. **Based on the Strategic Plan and Program Strategy following concepts have been developed into proposals and resources have been mobilized.**

Proposal for research was written and agreed between GEP and NCSW.

The title of the project is '*Research and Dialogues for Strengthening Policy Advice in Three Key Areas*'. It started from Feb and will end by the end of Jan 2012.

Researches on the following topics have been awarded to the selected researchers after due process:

- Assessment of the Capacities

of Women Development Departments at Provincial Level- Dr. Riffat Haq

- Assessment of Disaster Management Institutions and development of a Gender Responsive Preparedness Plan- Mr. Sohail Manzoor
- Police Reporting, Investigation Mechanisms, Political Interference and lastly safety and security/harassment of the victims from police perspective- Alph Consultants (Mr. Imdad Hussain)
- Shelters/Crisis Centers and Gender Crime Centers (Ms. Afiya Zia)



## N C S W P R E S S R E L E A S E S

### BY-ELECTIONS IN SHANGLA

The National Commission on the Status of Women is appalled that women were yet again not allowed to vote in the by-polls held in Shangla. As it was reported in the press, under an agreement between all contesting political parties, women were barred from casting their votes. There were 14 polling stations specifically designated for women, but according to Election Commission officials, not a single vote was cast there. The District Returning Officer for these by-polls in his statement said that all arrangements were completed at all 14 polling stations and the

polling staff was standing by, but not a single woman turned up to cast her vote. According to him, the Election Commission officials held talks with the local elders and the political parties' representatives to convince them to allow the women to vote, but to no avail.

This practice has been going on for years, and it is time that firm action was taken if democracy is to be strengthened in the country. Election results that reflect the will of only half the electorate cannot be considered free, fair and democratic. The results of the Shangla by-

elections may have been different if women had been allowed to vote. It is extremely regrettable that though women have at least 17% representation in the Legislative Assemblies, women in Shangla were not allowed to participate in this election. The NCSW strongly condemns this blatant flouting of the law and demands that the Shangla by-polls be declared null and void.

### ASSASSINATION GOVERNOR PUNJAB MR SALMAN TASEER

The National Commission on the Status of Women condemns the horrific and tragic assassination of Governor Punjab Mr Salman Taseer who was a liberal and progressive politician. His cruel assassination is a great loss not just to his family but also to the entire struggle and movement against retrogressive forces to build a peaceful, tolerant and just society. In his death, Pakistan has been deprived

of a liberal, educated and courageous leader.

When most political leaders backed down in the face of blackmailing by religious zealots, he stood his ground. His assassination must be seen as a blatant crime and cold blooded murder. The issue must not be defused by hiding behind a religious or political smoke screen.

His murderers should be expeditiously tried and convicted. Those inciting crimes in the name of religion must equally be held responsible. We expect the media to play a responsible role and not to allow itself to be used for inciting violence.

### ASSASSINATION OF FEDERAL MINISTER FOR RELIGIOUS MINORITIES MR SHAHBAZ BHATTI

Once again a voice of sanity has been silenced for speaking out boldly for justice and the rights of vulnerable people in Pakistan. The NCSW deplors the tragic and cold blooded assassination of Federal Minister for Religious Minorities Mr Shahbaz Bhatti, who was struggling to promote peace and interfaith harmony in society.

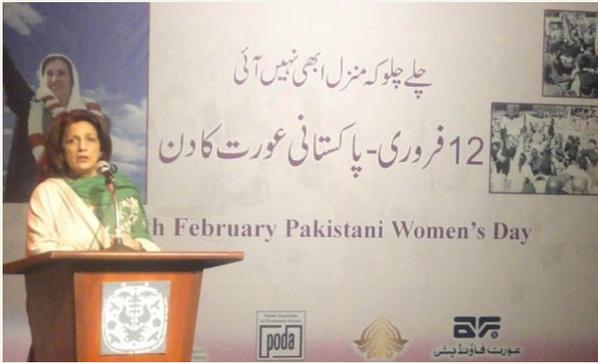
stead of being used to promote peace and learning are being used to spread anarchy. It is regrettable that no any action has been taken against those who spread hatred and promote violence.

The NCSW condemns perpetrators of such criminal acts and the impunity with which the extremists continue to operate. The Commission calls upon the Government to take concrete measures to improve security in the country and devise an appropriate strategy to firmly deal with such elements so that the rule of law is established. In this situation the religious minorities, who have been

assured equal citizenship rights by religion, the Constitution of the country and by the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, are left feeling insecure and unprotected.

Furthermore, we call upon the media not to give disproportionate coverage to those who have played a major role in sowing the seeds of hatred and providing a fertile environment for obscurantist forces. The media is urged to re-channelize its energies and resources towards promoting tolerance, peace and harmony and encourage rational thinking in society.

PICTURE STORY – CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL WOMEN DAY 12 FEB. 2011





WE ARE ON THE WEB:  
WWW.NCSW.GOV.PK



**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON  
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

H.No. 39, Street 56, F/6-4,  
Islamabad

Phone: 92-51-9224875

Fax: 92-51-9224877

E-mail: info@ncsw.gov.pk

New additions to the Human Resource  
pool at NCSW

**Mr Ghazanfar Hashmi joined NCSW as  
Manager Research**

**Mr Touseef Anwar, joined NCSW as  
Manager Finance**

**Mr Umair Hashmi joined NCSW as  
Manager Administration**

**Editorial Team:**

- Mrs. Nasreen Azhar,  
Member NCSW
- Mrs. Tahira Noor,  
Manager Communication
- Mr. M. Khalid Imran,  
IT Expert