Violence against women
In Afghanistan

Factors, root causes and situation
A Research Report
Violence Against Women In Afghanistan

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Although the public perception in Afghanistan on men-women/gender relations is apparently indicative of a special status and respect to women, but observations and findings from field research show a different reality. Violence is among the manifold difficulties and challenges facing women in their social and private life. Violence is perpetrated against women in various forms and manifestations and the perpetrators are men and sometimes women themselves in the family and society. From this perspective, violence in general and violence against women in particular is considered a widespread and undeniable reality in Afghanistan’s society.

The present report discusses the different types of violence against women in the year 1390. In addition to mentioning statistical information and cases and analysing statistics, the report gathers realities, observations and illustrative cases of violence, which are indeed shocking. Despite unremitting efforts by the AIHRC staff in recording and gathering cases of violence, it is still not possible to collect the real number of cases of violence against women as they happen. This is due to various reasons and complicated factors that mostly relate to the traditional practices governing the society. Although women have experienced violence several times inside and outside the family, they refrain from reporting to and following up the cases in the relevant authorities because of shame and disillusionment. The cases and statistical information gathered and mentioned in the present report have been mostly collected from hospitals, courts, relatives of victims or victims themselves who had approached the AIHRC offices and staff to get their complaints recorded. The last instance, as victims themselves consult with the AIHRC, has occurred when violence had caused health problems and serious outcomes for the victims, disrupting normal family relations, formalising problems and seeking legal and official solutions to contain violence.

Violence has been an unending experience for women in Afghanistan who are subjected to it in various forms throughout their life. According to the findings of this report, the most common manifestations of violence include physical violence, sexual violence, economic violence, verbal-mental violence and other kinds of violence that have been explained in further detail under the findings section of the report.
At least 1,544 women have undergone different types of violence in the year 1390, according to information from the AIHRC database. There have, however, been 4,865 instances of violence against women in this year. The discrepancy between the victims (cases) and the instances is due to the fact that in many cases, a woman has experienced more than one kind of violence (e.g., physical violence, verbal-mental violence and sexual violence).

Physical violence is the first most common form of violence against women in Afghanistan. This includes various violent acts, including beating, injuring, burning, poisoning, amputating, pulling off hair and the like that have widely been perpetrated against women. Similarly, women have been one of the main victims of the ongoing armed conflict. Women and children have mostly lost their lives in suicide attacks and explosions of roadside bombs. Women, children and other civilian individuals have included most of the casualties as these attacks are mainly carried out in crowded places, on streets/roads and in public places. Of all 4,865 instances of violence, 1,554 have involved physical violence, according to information from the violence against women database in the year 1390. In other words, this means that physical violence has comprised almost 32 per cent of all cases of violence against women. Other sources, including the report of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, also corroborates the fact that there has been widespread physical violence against women in the year 1390. Mass media have also extensively covered violence against women and the ordeals the victims have been through.

Sexual violence is the second most common form of violence against women, particularly against young women. Sexual violence includes forced sexual intercourse, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, demands for anal sex (abnormal sexual behaviour that is detrimental to women’s health), husbands’ illegitimate relationships with other individuals, forced observation of pornographic films and the like which are sexually demeaning and humiliating for women. Of all 4,865 instances of violence in the year 1390, 400 included sexual violence against women, based on the AIHRC data. These included forced sexual intercourse (160 cases), forced prostitution (25), forced pregnancy (3), forced abortion (12), demands for illegitimate acts (87), husbands’ affair (51), demeaning sexual behaviour (30), forced observation of pornographic films (5) and other kinds of sexual violence (27).

Economic violence is a different kind of violence against women that inflicts serious socio-economic damages on women and deprives them of their free will, decision-making power and employment opportunity. This is why the first outcome of economic violence is that it deprives women of their free will and
makes them dependent on men, their husbands in particular. Dependency and lack of participation in family decision-making subjects women to a subordinate position where they have no power to choose their employment, own property, engage in trade and use their salary (in case of employment outside the family). Economic violence includes lack of provision of alimony, prevention of employment, selling women’s precious property without their consent, extortion of their salary by husbands and other men in the family, deprivation of inheritance, lack of participation in family decision-making and the like. Out of 4,865 instances of violence against women in 1390, 785 are economic violence, according to information from the AIHRC database. These include lack of provision of alimony for wives and children (500 cases), selling women’s precious property without their permission (53), lack of participation in family decision-making (151), extortion of salary (30), deprivation of inheritance (25), prevention of employment (10) and other types of economic violence (16). The most common kind of economic violence includes lack of provision of alimony for wives and children that mainly occurs as a result of other family problems or separation where husbands refuse to fulfil their responsibilities to provide alimony to their families.

Verbal-Psychological violence is the third most common type of violence against women. This form of violence is diverse and occurs daily in many places. Verbal-mental violence includes bad language, cursing, demeaning speech, derision, threats to kill, threats to harm relatives, threats to expel from home, threats to re-marry, accusation, threats to leave women abandoned and the like. Although this is the broadest form of violence against women in the community, this has not been socially accepted as violent behaviour. The findings of the present report indicate that verbal-Psychological violence is more pervasive in cities than in villages. This is mainly due to the increasing presence and participation of girls and women in schools, education centres, English language and computer courses and the like in urban areas. The AIHRC data shows that 1,213 cases of verbal-mental violence have been perpetrated against women in 1390. These include threats to re-marry (44 cases), humiliation because of not having a child (33), derision (37), threats to divorce and take taking of children (68), accusations against women's character and behaviour (290), cursing (445), threats to leave women abandoned (25), humiliation because of not having a boy child (7), threats to kill (199), threats to harm relatives (12), threats to expel from home (48) and etc. (5).

As the findings of this report indicate, violence against women does not remain limited to the above-mentioned classifications. On the contrary, there are further kinds of violence that have been perpetrated against women. These include bad and badal marriages, forced marriages, forced divorces, expulsions...
from home, early marriages, prevention of education and prohibition of going out of home and going to friends and relatives’ house. As will be discussed in further details in the findings section, the pervasiveness and continuity of these forms of violence against women have caused few social and cultural reactions and these have ultimately turned into the commonplace in public attitudes. These cases of violence include prevention of education (33 cases), *badal* marriages (46), *bad* marriages (5), prohibition of going out of home (44), lack of freedom to choose spouse (96), forced marriages (172), forced divorces (45), early marriages (86), taking bride price (76), expulsions from home (243) and the like (59).

Violence against women in Afghanistan is not only a human rights issue, but also a major social problem. Therefore, combating such violence requires the adoption of policies at the national level and continued efforts of women activists and human rights institutions across the country. Increased media attention to violence and cases of violence against women is a positive change that has taken place in the country in the past recent years.
The Aim of the Report

At first, the present report seeks to provide and actual and accurate picture of violence against women and the causes, situations and reasons of this phenomenon. Although news reports and statistical information on violence against women are constantly presented by mass media, the lack of a research report based on field observation and study has been a serious shortcoming in the study of violence against women and its causes. Therefore, it seems that the present report has overcome this lacuna and the report is founded on field evidence, observation and study. This report not only presents quantitative information on violence but it also discusses the situations, causes and reasons for the occurrence and perpetuation of violence against women. The study of social, cultural and legal factors of violence against women has provided findings that can inform the prevention of violence and an effective campaign against it.

As indicated in this report, violence against women is not only a serious human rights concern but it also is a major social dilemma. This is why this report publishes statistical data on violence against women and makes recommendations to help the relevant authorities, women’s rights activists and human rights organisations adopt effective policies and programmes to combat and eliminate the phenomenon of violence against women.

In addition to providing data and making recommendations for effective action, this report endeavours to discuss violence against women from different perspective and sites this issue in the centre of social discourse. Violence against women is undoubtedly one of the most serious social problems in Afghanistan that is beginning to be raised as a social dilemma in media and public discourse. Since its inception, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has tried to include the protection and promotion of women’s rights as a key priority and objective in its programmes. It is vivid that violence against women is one of the most serious issues that not only violates the basic human rights of women but also obstructs women’s development and self-sufficiency and the realisation of their rights. Similarly, the AIHRC has sought not only to protect women’s human rights but also to highlight challenges that affect the achievement of their human rights.
In addition to the foregoing, this report intends to use its findings, statistical information and cases to argue that violence, particularly the latent violence, against women is pervasive and commonplace in the family and society and this will have destructive and negative implications. In other words, verbal-psychological violence and certain types of sexual violence in the domestic space is perceived as commonplace in a way that women are forced to accept such behaviour without any reaction. However, as demonstrated in this report, verbal-psychological violence and certain abnormal sexual behaviour inflicts harmful and serious damages on women bodily and mentally. Humiliating and demeaning speech used against women in alleys, on streets, in public places and within the family apparently have no physical implications, but such behaviour directly harm and affect women’s character, behaviour and mental well-being. Therefore, one of the objectives of this report is to demonstrate that violent acts against women do have consequences which are not condemned but often praised in Afghanistan’s patriarchal society.

The Constraints of the Report
Human rights activity generally faces many obstacles in societies and countries like Afghanistan. Human rights research undoubtedly meets more challenges than any other human rights activity in such a setting. The first problem faced in gathering the data for this report was lack of security and inaccessibility of certain insecure areas. Insecurity is a serious challenge, preventing somehow the full implementation of the research plan in terms of gathering data and conducting interviews and making certain provinces and areas practically inaccessible. Despite this, efforts were made to have the AIHRC staff gather cases from all provinces to the maximum extent possible and to include these cases in this report.

A second problem is the dominance of old and long-standing customary practices which make it difficult to talk to girls and women who have experienced violence. These traditional practices prevent the accurate study of women who have undergone torture, harassment and violence and they also make the study of violence and its causes to be perceived as inappropriate and egregious interference into private and family affairs. The perception of women in such a cultural tradition society is like possession/property or object and any questions about such an object which is considered as intolerable intervention into private space. As a result, the AIHRC staff members, in some instances, were not able to ask questions openly and gather realistic and accurate data. Such traditions and customs prevent direct access to and dialogue with violence-stricken women in some villages and regions and no one there accepts that violence has been perpetrated against women.
Armed groups such as the Taleban and other radical forces in some provinces and areas have made it difficult to conduct human rights activity, collect data and conduct interviews and field observations and the AIHRC staff members were not able to implement their programmes in an appropriate and planned manner. This is not due to lack of security; there is security but the mere existence of such groups has made it impossible to conduct research work. For instance, one can mention the Taleban, Hezb-e Islami and other fundamentalist groups affiliated with the al-Qaeda that are active in the north, east and south of the country and prevent research work and the collection of factual information.

Time limitations, mountainous and outlying areas and lack of transportation facilities were another challenge in this research that restricted access to such areas. Due to the mountainous structure and geographical location, Afghanistan is a challenge for human rights activists and researchers in terms of access to hard-to-pass and far-flung areas. As a result, the AIHRC staff members cannot regularly monitor all villages, towns and areas in the country and record data on the situation of violence against women. This problem, as said, is a consequence of time limitations, lack of the necessary resources and the country’s specific geographical structure, which restrict the continued and prompt access of human rights activists.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Background

Theoretical Studies and the Background of Violence

As in other countries and societies, the history of violence against women in Afghanistan is as long as the history of humankind and human community. Nevertheless, the severity and pervasiveness of violence against women differs on the basis of the socio-cultural bonds, relations and structures in any society. Violence against women constitutes a major part of violence in collective human life’s relationships and is an example of historically unequal relations between men and women in the human community.

Although violence against women has a lengthy history in Afghanistan, little research has been conducted to study this topic. Despite the lengthy historical background of violence against women, it is a matter of several decades that violence has been placed in the centre of social problems in Afghanistan. In other words, it was in the post-Taleban era that violence started to be regarded as a socio-cultural issue and a violation of human-moral values and women’s human rights after the AIHRC - as Afghanistan’s national human rights institution - and other human rights organisations and activists started to grow. These changes, as perceived by this report, were made in Afghanistan since 2001 and they have had considerable implications for politics, society, law-making and education for and on women.

The present research seeks to shed light on the background, setting, factors, reasons and situation of violence against women and to offer solutions and recommendations in order to address it. Similarly, research work on violence against women can help the AIHRC and other human rights organisations adopt efficient and effective policies and programmes and achieve expected and satisfactory successes in fighting against and overcoming this violent and challenging situation.

Violence against women has a pervasive socio-cultural background in Afghanistan, as a result, it is not possible to pinpoint the beginning of violence against women. As society has changed, violence has taken different shapes, but has persisted in social relationships. This is despite the fact that violence is not an acceptable part of collective relations and has been consistently condemned by legal and moral norms. On the other hand, popular cultures,
narratives, cinemas, films, media, daily relations, playing tools and suchlike extensively reproduce violence and violent acts and they, therefore, praise violence (Malešević, 2012). As indicated by historical studies, this is not a newly emerging change, but it is indicative of the long-standing and persistent nature of violence in Afghanistan’s society.

Violence and violent acts are in fact manifest indications of the violent person’s ambition and domination and they, hence, comprise the entirety of the life of the violence-stricken woman. This means that violence includes women’s private and public spheres and is inflicted on women in various physical, mental, economic and verbal forms.¹ As long as patriarchy is perceived as the dominant culture and public value in Afghan society, violence and the tendency to commit violent acts will remain an integral part of culture and valued relationships. If the laws and legal systems regulate men-women relations and the relations of a society’s citizens in a way that respects each other and gender equality, this will help simply to control discriminatory and violent behaviour. Although considerable changes have been made in the law and law-making in favour of women in the recent years in Afghanistan, part of on-going violence against women still emanates from the laws that provide the structures for perpetrating violence against women. Discrimination and discriminatory behaviour is one of the factors of violence. Discrimination in fact obstructs the equality between men and women and perpetuates violence. On the one hand, violence perpetuates discrimination and the two have a correlation.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors and reasons, Afghanistan’s entrenched traditional and customary practices constitute one of the strongest sources of violence. Afghanistan’s dominant traditions have caused women to perceive unequal family and societal relationships as a natural and immutable condition and not to report on-going ill-treatment and violence to the relevant authorities. Therefore, many girls and women are not willing to report violence against them in the family and society to the police and other relevant authorities and this means that the data on violence as collected by women’s rights and human rights activists do not represent the entirety of violence in the family and society. There is a term in this respect known as ‘while violence’, which means that no trace is found on violence against women in the family and society and that all verbal-psychological and other violence remains concealed and un-disclosed. This kind of violence, which is pervasive in Afghanistan, causes victim girls and women who are willing to report cases of

¹ https://www.tavaana.org/courses-view.jsp?pageId=2071502000341283303812408
violence to the relevant authorities not to be able to provide evidence, claim compensation and win the sympathy of human rights institutions and activists.²

A historical view of women’s situation in Afghanistan reveals that women have rarely been a part of political, social and economic decision-making processes. The private behaviour and life of Afghanistan’s kings and political leaders and managers shows a dark picture of women’s life. In order to forge good relations with kings and other leaders, ethnic and tribal leaders had often used women as sexual slaves and to-be-possessed as pleasure-producing objects in order to strike deals and build political connections. The term haramsara (royal private sphere) is well-known in Afghanistan’s history and similarly women of the haramsara were viewed as sexual commodities and political deals and not as free and dignified human beings. This is despite the fact that the women of the haramsara were the favoured women/wives of the kings and princes. Some of these women were favoured by kings throughout or during a part of their lives and some were presented to kings as gifts. These women lived under the shadow of the king and there was a need for a space such as the haramsara to keep them. Although little research has been done on women’s situation in Afghanistan’s contemporary history, various indicators such as polygamy, the women of the haramsara, taking women as booty in war, bad and badal marriages, objectification and instrumentalisation of women and suchlike reveal structural violence against women throughout Afghanistan’s history. There are many examples of direct violence against women in Afghanistan’s contemporary history and some of these are as follows:

1. Taking women as the booty of the war by the victorious party
2. Abandoning women by the defeated party as part of obedience and reconciliation
3. Exploitation of the court by tribal elders by marrying girls to the rulers
4. Forcible taking of women (without their consent and acceptance) by the rulers in order to win the support of elders and khans
5. Using women as bribe and solution of politico-administrative problems
6. Bad and badal marriages of women in inter-tribal conflicts and murders (Kazem, 2005)

A short look at Afghanistan’s history reveals that the history of Afghanistan is the history of violence. If Afghanistan’s history is one day re-written according to research and scientific standards, there is no doubt that violence against women, against political opposition, against ethnic groups outside the circle of power and against free thinkers inside the circle of power and ignoring a

² https://www.tavaana.org/courses-view.jsp?pageId=2071502000341283303812408
significant segment of Afghanistan’s population will be the centre and a main indicator of our socio-historical developments in the past.

Laws and Legal Mechanisms

Legal mechanisms and rules in which human rights and recognized human rights values have been respected are a major guarantee for the protection of human rights. Although there are several problems in this regard in Afghanistan, remarkable work and reform have been undertaken.

Violence against women is a deplorable phenomenon that has been rejected and condemned in international human rights instruments particularly in women’s rights instruments. The countries are also required to enact or amend their national law to ensure compatibility with universal human rights values and women’s human dignity. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international human rights instrument that has regarded discrimination as one of the factors of violence against women and violations of their rights and has required the governments to respect this instrument. Article 1 of the Convention reads:

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term ‘discrimination against women’ shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The United Nations also adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993 and warned against widespread violence in the family and society. The Declaration also warned against violence perpetrated by government institutions and agents. Article 1 of the Declaration specifies:

For the purposes of this Declaration, the term ‘violence against women’ means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

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3 http://www.unic-ir.org/hr/convenantion-women.htm
4 http://www.unic-ir.org/p2unic.php?pg=19
In addition, there are other international instruments that require the
governments to prevent and combat violence against women. For example, in
the Statute of the International Criminal Court (article 7, paragraphs g and h),
discrimination and violence against women is considered a crime against
humanity if perpetrated on a widespread or systematic scale. Hence, the
governments have an obligation to adopt a policy to combat violence against
women in its legal, judicial and executive dimensions and seek to ensure the
non-occurrence of violence against women.

Considerable reform has been made in Afghanistan’s legal system in the past
recent years. Of this reform, we can refer to the ratification and endorsement
of the Law on the Prohibition of Violence against Women in the year 1388 and
this is fundamental progress with regard to women’s rights. The Law on the
Prohibition of Violence against Women has criminalised many acts of violence
against women and has rejected violence against women in all circumstances.
Article 4 of the Law stipulates, ‘Violence is a crime. No one has the right to
perpetrate violence in a residence, governmental institution, organisation,
public place, vehicle or other place. The perpetrator shall be punished
according to the provisions of this Law’.  

Article 7 of the Law has established a mechanism whereby violence and
violent acts can be reported to the relevant authorities. If respected and fairly
and lawfully followed by the relevant authorities, these measures can, to a
great extent, eliminate the context for violence and ensure justice for women
who have been subjected to acts of violence. Article 7 of the Law on the
Prohibition of Violence against Women clarifies:

The victim of violence, herself or her relatives, can lodge a written
complaint in police and law authorities, courts and other relevant authorities.
These authorities have an obligation to record the received complaints and
address them in accordance with the provisions of the law and send a written
notification to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. Upon the receipt of the
written notification or direct complaint by the victim of violence or her
relatives, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs has an obligation to take the
necessary measures to establish contact with the victim of violence and the
prosecution department and the court have an obligation to prioritise the case
of violence and address it in the earliest time possible.

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5 Allama, Gholam Haidar, Speech, Ziafat-e Kherad ceremony, Kateb Institute of Higher Education, 1388
6 Law on the Prohibition of Violence against Women, Official Gazette, 10 Asad 1388, serial no 989
7 Law on the Prohibition of Violence against Women, article 7 (1388)
1389 Calendar of Central Statistics Organisation
Although the Law on the Prohibition of Violence against Women is a positive achievement given the entrenched and powerful social traditions and customs in Afghanistan, there are shortcomings and inadequacies in the Law that pave the way for the occurrence of violence. Of these shortcomings, one can refer to article 39 of the Law that subjects the handling of cases and the prosecution of the perpetrator of violence to the complaint by the victim or her legal representative. If no complaint is lodged, there will be no prosecution and no justice. The Law has this provision while most of the cases of violence remain concealed and disclosed in Afghanistan due to various traditional reasons, inaccessibility, lack of resources and lack of awareness of victims.

One cannot ignore the legal, awareness-raising and protection efforts of women’s rights defenders and institutions, in addition to the above-mentioned legal mechanisms. There are many women’s rights institutions and networks in Afghanistan that work for the establishment of justice, the realisation of the rights of women and combating violence. Besides raising awareness about the rights, privileges, obligations and responsibilities of women in the family and society, these efforts also focus on the protection of violence-stricken and victimised women. These awareness-raising, protection and human rights activities have in fact created a mechanism that plays a significant role in reducing violence, establishing justice and realising women’s rights. Similarly, women’s rights organisations and institutions not only work for the fulfilment of the rights of women but they also act as a pressure group to monitor government’s legal and national policies, critique them and work for their reform.

The figure 1,544 in fact shows the number of women who have experienced various forms of violence. Similarly, the details of such violence have been gathered and recorded by the AIHRC staff members.
Chapter 3

Objective of Report

As mentioned earlier, one of the AIHRC’s priorities and areas of work is the protection and promotion of the women’s human rights. Working in the said area is, in fact, a very serious priority for the AIHRC. Since the very inception of the Women Rights Protection Unit, the AIHRC has been active in this regard giving out the result of its activities via thematic reports, researches, radio interviews etc. Violence against women, thus to the AIHRC, is not only a vivid human rights violence and violation hurting women’s integrity, dignity and honor, but it is also a very big social dilemma. Therefore, the prime objective behind preparing this report, which is actually a periodical report on violence against women, is to highlight the rate, situation and impact of violence against women in the country.

In addition to presenting a precise picture of the situation of violence against women, the AIHRC wants to prepare and present deterrent solutions and methods for issues such as violence for the authorized institutions and organizations. And this would be done by means of thematic and research-based reports. Thus, the other objective behind the current report is to prepare and present some effective mechanism against violence so as to reduce and, eventually, do away with this ominous phenomenon in the country. The current report is a research-based and descriptive report, based on which, effective and practical solutions could be presented to the authorized organs. This way, the factors and the grounds for the emergence of violence in the social relationships could be uprooted.

Frequently Asked Queries

Being one of complicated and intricate social phenomenon, violence against women in Afghanistan has its deep and widespread roots in social relationships; it has penetrated in the deepest layers of cultural, social and political relationships. Violence in general, especially the one against women, has various, complicated and hardly comprehensible grounds and factors. Therefore, it has been tried in this report to firstly present some questions and then, in order to find the answers, refer to the research carried out, the relevant information and, most importantly, the victims and the women who are constantly faced with such an ominous phenomenon - the women who have
Violence Against Women In Afghanistan

experienced violence enormously. There are frequently asked queries in connection with the violence against women. However, the effort here is to include only the ones whose answers would help with the comprehension of violence against women in Afghanistan, so they could open avenues passing through this violent situation and structural violence against women. In trying to find relevant and rational answers to the questions, we referred to the data, the available information and the victims in the regions. The questions are as follow:

- How many instances of violence happened in 1390 and how many victims did they claim in all?
- What kinds of violence have happened? How, where and by whom?
- What are the factors and the grounds for occurrence of violence and how could we overcome them?

The above mentioned questions are not the only ones, the answers of which are being sought by the current report, but they are the most fundamental questions that form the base of the findings in this report. That being stated, there are also other questions that we would come across in various parts of the report.

Statistical Population

Although there is no precise statistics about the population of the country and the rate of women population could not be gauged precisely, the recent figure announced by the Central Statistics Bureau estimates the population to be close to 26,000,000, based on which women constitute 49%.  

In this report, 1544 women have been interviewed and the report has been prepared based on their views, stories and the details of violence-related cases. Since there are not any statistics on the victims and the women faced with violence in Afghanistan, no figure could be presented as the victimized women total statistical population and select a sampling and a statistical population based on that. Thus, gathering information for this report is done based on the questionnaires exclusive for violence against women or the statements of the victims or their relatives who either refer to the AIHRC. Either way, the explanations, violence-related evidences and documents are gathered, registered and eventually reflected in this report.

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8 Quoted from the Central Statistics Bureau
9 Various forms of violence have been exercised on these 1544 women; majority of the victims have experienced multiple forms of violence. For instance, they have not only experienced physical violence but they have also endured sexual, verbal and emotional violence.
Out of the 34 provinces, 30 have been covered in this report; the other 4 have not been attended to due to insecurity prevalent there. These provinces are Khust, Noorestan, Paktia and Nimroz.

![Chart 1](image)

The other issue worth being discussed in terms of statistical population is whether or not the given figure - 1544 victimized women during 1390 - can generally represent or be applicable to the entire women population of Afghanistan. Restrictively speaking, the mentioned figure could not quantitatively be made applicable to all women of the country without precise sampling from the total population of the country, though. Nonetheless, the said figure reflects an even fact in terms of violence against women in Afghanistan in a qualitative way. In other words, the victims are residents of one of the 30 provinces of the country making it evident that the cultural, social and legal situations of the women in these areas and those of the unattended provinces are similar; the women endure and suffer similar
violence-related factors and grounds. Among the provinces included in this report, Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat, Kandahar, Balkh and Dai Kundi each respectively show the most number of violent instances against women. Kabul alone has bagged 47% of the violence. For further information, refer to the previous chart.

Data Collection and Data Analyses
The collected data in this report include statistics, figures, explanatory cases, pictures, interviews and the AIHRC’ monitors’ observations - all collected within a year. In short, it could be said that both quantitative and qualitative data have been utilized in this report. In order to properly categorize the data, the collection has been entered into one database and the software such as SPSS and Excel have been used to analyze the same for the final report.

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative data, there are cases and instances of violence that have been explained in detail accompanied with evidences provided by the victims as to how they happened and what impact they had. Therefore, some of these cases have been briefly highlighted in every violence-related narrative so that, on one hand, they could make the presented statistics more comprehendible and, on the other hand, they could show the depth and width of the violence as they happen.

Violence against women is a very complicated phenomenon and is generally caused by various social, cultural, educational, psychological, economical and other factors which make it difficult to surface in the statistics and evidences. That is why both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to analyze the data in this report. In addition to the mentioned data and information, the AIHRC’s officials’ interviews and their observation in various areas and provinces have also provided the opportunities to obtain the victimized women’s trust and cooperation. This way, the officials could easily have access to hidden facts and information which cannot be obtained during common interviews and observations. In other words, while interviews and registration of violence-related cases were taking place, a sort of participatory observation was also being had. Owing to the said trust and empathy with the victims’ experiences and sentiments in the participatory observations, the most hidden stories and experiences of violence were easily being inferred from what the victims were saying.

The integration of quantitative data with the qualitative information and findings is quite a complicated affair. Therefore, necessary precision has been taken care of in the current report so that explanatory and qualitative evidences could be presented when explaining any figure that represent
instance or instances of violence. This approach, on one hand, helps in ratification of the figures and the figure-based analysis through the explanatory evidences and cases and, on the other hand, it would help the readers to understand the situation and statistics of violence in a very tangible and precise way.
Chapter 4

Findings of this Report
4.1 Types of Violence

Violence against women in Afghanistan occurs in various forms. The most common types are physical, sexual, economic, psychological and verbal violence which were collected and recorded during the year 1390. According to the outputs and statistic recorded in database of the AIHRC, during the year 1390 at least 1544 women suffered from different types of violence. The types of violence imposed on women during this year and covered by this report exceed 4865 instances. The difference between statistic and real cases of violence emanates from the fact that in most cases a woman simultaneously experiences more than one type of violence, for example a woman suffers from physical, verbal, psychological and sexual violence at the same time. For this reason explanation of the difference between statistic (cases and instances) and actual cases of violence imposed on women can prevent any misunderstandings in the report.

During the year 1390, a total of 1554 cases of physical violence, 404 cases of sexual violence, 785 cases of economic violence, 1216 cases of verbal violence and 906 cases of other types of violence have been imposed on women that will be explained in detail.

Physical violence includes different types of violence such as beating, wounding, burning, poisoning, cutting parts of the body, pulling out hair and other types which repeatedly imposed on women. Similarly we witness that during the armed conflicts, women are the main victims of violence. Life causalities emanating from armed conflicts, especially victims of suicide attacks and road mines explosions are mostly women and children. Such attacks usually occur in the crowded areas and along the roads where the figures of civilian victims...
show that this catastrophe is escalating by each year. Air attacks by the international forces in their fights against terrorism in Afghanistan also cause casualties among women. The attacks are usually made on the basis of wrong information or on the areas where the Taliban use women and civilians as their shield and victimize women.

The second type of violence is sexual violence against women occurred during the year 1390. Sexual violence includes: forced sexual intercourse, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, demanding illegitimate an anal sex (unhealthy and harmful sexual activities), and illegal sexual relation of husbands with others, forced watching of pornography and other behaviors which sexually humiliate women.

The third form of violence is economic violence against women which seriously affects social and economic living situation of women and in this way they lose their independence and power of decision making. Since economic violence causes the loss of independence and decision making, therefore women become dependent on the men of the family, especially depend on their husbands and they can not get rid of the situation and other forms of violence easily. Under this situation and in case of economic violence, women not only lose their welfare and prestige, but remain under the yoke of men in the family and in the society and they have to bear other types of violence too. Economic violence against women usually includes non-provision of alimony, work prevention, selling of women’s valuable belongings without their permission, extortion of their salary or incomes, depravation from the right to inheritance, insufficient authority in the family, and other types of violence.

Another common type of violence against women is verbal-psychological violence. This type of violence is widespread and occurs in different places. The cases and types of this violence include: insult, curse, humiliating language, making fun of, threat to killing, threat to assault on her relatives, threat to kick out of home, threat to polygamy, accusation, threat to abandonment and other similar cases.
Verbal-psychological violence is the most common violence against women that few people in the society consider it as violence. In a comparative view to verbal-psychological violence, we realize that the level of this kind of violence is higher in the cities than in the villages and rural areas. In the cities, especially in the educational centers and, women suffer from verbal-psychological violence and harassments. Degrading and insulting language and other verbal and psychological mistreatments against women can be witness and heard on the campus and around educational centers, schools and universities.

Violence against women is not limited to the aforementioned boundaries, but there are other forms and types of violence exist and imposed on women such as Bad, exchange, forced marriage, forced divorce, kicking out of home, child marriage, deprivation from education, prevention from leaving home and visiting their relatives which remained out of the above classification. Due to widespread occurrence of these types of violence against women in society, there is less social and cultural reaction against them. These types of violence are considered ordinary or normal and have been changed common practices.
4.2, Physical Violence
Among all types of violence against women, physical violence is counted as the most common and widespread one. The outputs from database of the violence against women registered during the year 1390 show that out of 4865 instances of violence against women, 1554 of them are physical violence. In this way it is seen that out of all cases of violence against women registered during the year 1390, around 32% of them are physical violence. The report published by the Ministry of Women Affairs shows that during the year 1390 physical violence against women were committed, but its level is lower comparing to the figure and cases recorded in the database of the AIHRC. Physical violence as mentioned before covers different types of violence. The following chart shows various types of physical violence against women.

(Chart 3)

As shown in the above chart, physical violence against women occurs in different forms. Outputs from the AIHRC database indicate that pulling out hair (193 cases), slapping (378 cases), kicking (424 cases), beating (322 cases) are the most common types of violence used against women.
Physical violence against women is basically not limited to painful physical experiences and torture, but continuation of such violence ultimately results in adverse and horrible consequences and even results to death. Findings by the AIHRC show that as a result of physical violence 276 women became physically disabled during the year 1390 and 37 women lost their lives.

Reports by the Ministry of Women Affairs show that violence against women in the year 1390 resulted in death of 13 women, though the said figure shows only the cases of violence which are officially recorded.\textsuperscript{10} Taking into consideration the widespread nature of physical violence against women, we can say that its actual number is greater than what has been collected by the responsible institutions.

It is clear that viewing the statistic and types of violence or its increase or decrease in number will never reveal the actual experiences of violence faced by women. For this reason explaining some cases of violence against women clearly show the depth and expansion of such violence in the country. Here we

\textsuperscript{10} www.mowa.gov.af/fa/page2729 (retrieved in January, 2, 2012.)
see some examples of violence which are really shocking:

First Case - A woman who was forced by her parents to get married with her cousin says:

“Three years ago I was forced by my parents to get married with my cousin who was a soldier in the National Army. One month later different types of violence started and every day I was beaten without any reason. Under different accusations, such as talking with my father or other scant reasons he beat me. He repeatedly threatened me to death by knife and weapon. Out of fear and panic to be killed, I aborted my child three times. Now I want to divorce, but I have no one to help me. Many times a Jirga (traditional meeting) intervened to settle our problems, but my husband does not abide by his promise and again continues to beat me. The Jirga forced me to go to my husband’s house, but he does not abide by his promise and beats me repeatedly. For this reason I do not believe in the decision made by the Jirga.”

Second Case- A woman who suffered from different types of tortures and violence by her husband narrates her experience as following:

“I got married three years ago and my husband treated me very well for one year. After one year he started violence against me and always beats me. Few months ago when my husband returned home from Ghoormach district (where he runs a shop) he told me to take out his cloth from his baggage to wear. When I opened the baggage I saw the dead body of a seven or eight month old child that was cut into pieces. After seeing that, I screamed and fainted. When I recovered, I saw that there was nothing inside the baggage. One day he put an electrical tool inside my body and pushed it and stirred until brood run out of my body. In addition he gave different medicines to my 9 months old infant and even he intended to sexually assault on her. I pleaded and told him that she is your daughter and it is very sinful, but he paid no heed. Now I can not tolerate such a situation and it is very difficult for me.”

The abovementioned cases are examples of violence against women which normally occurs in Afghanistan. Although these examples can never depict the depth and expansion of physical violence against women, at least they can help us to illustrate a picture of violations which are close to realities. On the other hand, by studying these cases we can easily recognize the root causes, grounds and factors of violence. As the cases of physical violence show, there are many common causes for continuation of physical violence. The first and the most important cause can be the unequal social, political and economic relations between men and women in our society. It means that the powerful and dominant presence of men in political and economic arena in the society has caused superiority of men in gender relations and women have been victimized
in a male dominant society. Men have numerous tools of pressure and exploitation in their hands. From economic sources to traditions and customs, legal and judicial systems are all masculine or male dominant. In this way men are always in a superior position. When women come under oppression or violence, they are obliged to refer to an institution which is male dominant and less attention would be paid to them. Even if they complain to the police or judicial organs, mostly women would be blamed as if they had been disobedient. There are many cases of violence against women collected and recorded in database of the AIHRC which show that intervention of Jergas or referring to legal and judicial institution has been less effective and often they ended in reconciliation or ignoring all signs of violence the side or sides are invited to continue their regular life.

The second reason for continuation of physical violence is non-prosecution of the cases by judicial organs and they pay no serious attention to the cases of violence against women. They blame and punish women for publicizing their private and family affairs which cause problem and trouble for their families. It also indicates a male dominant relation and tradition in the society. In other words, existence of harmful traditions can prepare the ground for victimization of women and under this condition men can easily resort to violence against women without being prosecuted. This fact, as explained here may not be approved by judicial institutions, but the daily life and practical facts and field researches clearly confirm it.
The third reason for physical violence as mentioned earlier is prevalence of harmful traditions and customs in the society. In Afghanistan, presence of women in the political and social arena is very limited. Absence of women in the general arena is due to their defined roles in the society. A picture of ideal women is those who stay in the framework of household and are busy at taking care of their children and husbands. For this reason, these women as human beings ignore their wishes and hopes and continually are at the service of men in the family and take care of their children. Such a condition has no other meaning except submission of women against male dominant system and such a condition is firmly legalized by harmful traditions and costumes. Under this condition if women refrain from irrational demands of men or their husbands, it will never be acceptable by their husbands and naturally instead of rational dialogue for settlement of the issues, men taking advantage of their physical superiority in the first step resorting to beating, torture and physical violence to subdue women.

4.3, Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a type of widespread violence against women which repeatedly happens in Afghanistan, though due to the nature of this violence as a taboo, these cases are not publicized and addressed through media. In spite of that, media, institutions and activists of women rights continually presents reports on expansion of sexual violence and non-follow up of these cases, but still the level of sexual violence is concerning.

Findings and data collected by the AIHRC show that during the year 1390 out of 4865 instances of violence 400 instances relate to sexual violence against women. Sexual violence consists of numerous type including forced sexual intercourse (160), forced prostitution(25), forced pregnancy (3), force abortion (12) demanding illegitimate sexual relations (87) husbands’ affair (51), humiliating sexual behavior (30) forced watching of pornography (5) and other
There are various reasons behind sexual violence in Afghanistan. Interviews with victims and cases related to sexual violence show that most of the victims have been victimized at home by a relative of their husbands or a family member. Deception to get married, sexual assault by a family member, imposition of sexual activities harmful to health and mental condition of women are the cases mentioned by a number of women. The following cases depict in detail different types of sexual violence:

**First Case**

A girl who was kidnapped in a province of Afghanistan talks about her experience and sexual assault on her: “It was late evening when I was going to my brother’s house. On the way a man in military uniform carrying a pistol accompanied by another man kidnapped me and took me to her house and sexually attacked on me. Then he got married with me by force. After sexual assault and forced marriage he continually warned me to keep silent. When my
family referred to the district authorities, no measure was taken to protect my legal rights.

Second Case
Another woman says that due to resistance against sexual assault by her father-in-law, she is now being accused to stealing her house properties and cash money. She states,

“Many years ago I got married. After marriage my husband went to Iran, though I was pregnant. After sometimes my child girl was born and I was waiting for her father to return home. During the winter of that year due to some problems and sickness I went to live at my father’s house. The reality was that my father-in-law intended to sexually assault on me, but I resisted. After that incident he started beating me now and then. When my husband returned from Iran I narrated the case to him. Instead of protecting me, my husband tied my hands and feet with a rope. After few days I referred to the district authorities and officially complained. When my petition was referred to the District Legal Department, my father in law immediately sent my husband to Iran and he charged me with stealing three hundred thousands Afghani, in this way I was accused to a crime that I did not commit.”

Third Case:
A woman who was forced to prostitution narrates her experience as following:

“Sixteen years ago when I was 12 years old, my father forced me to get married. After sometimes, my husband went to Iran and I was living with his father. After many years my husband returned from Iran and we moved to another house. My husband started quarrelling with me every day under different pretexts until the landlord kicked us out of his house. Then we moved to another house. One night my husband entered home together with a stranger and told me that I had to spend the night with that man. The night was dark and under pretext of dressing I went to the other room and secretly telephoned to my father and told him about this incident. Then my father informed the neighbors and the police. After a moment, the police entered our house and arrested my husband and the other man. Now both of them are in the jail. I registered my case to the AIHRC in order to prevent my husband to make any plot against me.

Fourth Case
A woman who was beaten by her husband due to rejecting his demand stated,

“Two years ago my parents married me to my cousin. While beating me as usual he wanted me to accept his demand (anal sex), but I did not allow him because it was harmful to my health. After rejecting his demand, he was always beating me. The signs of beating on my body are still visible. Although I
complained to the security police in our district, I want to inform the AIHRC about this case.”

The above mentioned cases clearly depict different types of sexual violence which usually remain hidden and occasionally are publicized. Direct sexual assault on girls or forcing them to prostitution which were clearly mentioned in the above cases are widespread violence against women. Obedience of women to the demands made by men as revealed in the researches and studies show that sexual violence causes numerous physical and psychological diseases for women. Such relations that only satiate sexual desire of men are considered violation of the rights of women. It changes women to a tool for one sided satisfaction of men. Under such condition, women are victimized and sometimes they resort to suicide in order to get rid of this situation.

**A Shocking incident** which shows the depth and seriousness of violence against women in Afghanistan is the case of sexual assault and killing of a girl (Shakila) in Bamian province. The case details are as following:

Shakila daughter of Mohammad Bakhsh, 18 years old was a native of Sungrais village of Punjab district who was living in Dasht-e-Barchi district of Kabul. It was two years that Shakila was living at her sister’s (Qurban’s house) located in Zargaran village of Bamian province. On Friday dated 7/11/1390 it was between 1:30- 2:30 pm when Shakila was killed in the house shared by the family of Wahidi Behishty. Information collected by colleagues in Bamian regional office from the local police show that in addition to a gun, a bullet shell, a black rosary and a dirty wet pillow were found. The report by forensic doctor indicated loss victim’s virginity which directly shows that the victim was first sexually assaulted and then mercilessly was killed. According to Wahidi Behishtti and other members of his family, during this incident Qurban (her sister’s husband) was not at home and he had gone to the Provincial Council. This fact was confirmed by Depute Chairman of the Provincial Council. Qurban’s wife (the victim’s sister) was out to fetch drinking water. Only Wahidi Behishti, his wife, his cousin Abdul Wahab and his nephew, Najibullah were at home. According to the local judge, the victim’s brother pointed to Hadi
Behishti and accused him as the main perpetrator. The evidences and witnesses show that the incident occurred when there was no relative of the victim present at home and it prepared the ground for assailants to commit such a crime. The perpetrator(s) shot dead the victim in order to prevent disclosure of this crime.

It is worth mentioning that Shakila’s case is officially under investigation in the attorney office of Bamian province and the Commission’s regional office in Bamian follows up and monitors this case. Due to its seriousness, this case has been followed up by civil society institutions, media and human rights organizations too.

The main problem regarding struggle against such violations is rooted in the nature and how these crimes occurs in the society. Since sexual violence is a phenomenon which often occurs inside the families in secrete, it is difficult to understand the actual level of its occurrence. On the other hand as it was indicated earlier, existence of traditions and customs contrary to the rights women which are repeatedly mentioned by media and human rights circles have caused sexual violence, honor killings and other crimes against women to happen under the name of defense of honor.

4.4 Verbal- Psychological Violence

One type of common violence against women is verbal-psychological violence by using insulting and humiliating words which targets the personality and psyche of women. It is rarely recognized as violence. For this reason a large portion of these repeatedly used behaviors and treatments (verbal-psychological violence) is not condemned. Humiliating and degrading behaviors and treatments against women usually occur inside the family or in public places such as on the streets, markets and stores or other similar places.

The cases of verbal-psychological violence found and collected by the AIHRC during the year 1390 exceed 1213 instances and in general includes the following types:

Threatening to remarriage (44), insult for bearing no child (33), mocking (37) threatening to divorce and taking the child (68), condemning personality and behaviors of women (290), using bad language (445), threatening to abandonment (25) insult for having no son (7) threat to killing (199) threatening to assault on her relatives (12) threatening to expulsion from home (48), other types of violence (5). These are the main types of verbal- psychological violence against women.
Verbal-psychological violence has harmful consequences. This type of violence apparently imposed on women without any physical pressure or behavior, but its consequences affect the personality and behavior of women for life long. Insult, mocking, degradation and other threats, gradually put women in psychological situation that they wait for an unfavorable incident to happen any moment.

The studies and observations made by the staff of regional and provincial offices of the AIHRC in the villages of different provinces show that continuation of verbal-psychological violence ultimately results in self-immolation and other critical issues. Similarly the cases show that due to prevalence of customs and traditions in the society, a small number of the cases become public. As an example we can mention insurance of family and parents’ honor and prestige which often victimize young girls. Here we can see some cases of verbal-psychological violence:

**First Case**

The mother of a girl narrates about verbal-psychological violence against her daughter as following: My daughter got married two years ago. One year after marriage, she faced with different types of violence and tortures by her husband. He made different accusations against her and became very suspicious. He always used bad language against my daughter and harassed her psychologically. In addition he prevented my daughter to continue her education, though she was a student in 10th grade.
Second Case:
A woman talks about violence and harassment imposed by her husband: “Six years ago when I was 16 years old I got married without my consent. I have two daughters one is four years old and the other is six months old. My husband is a rogue and believes in no discipline and order. He always insults and beats me under different pretexts and makes false accusations against me. In addition he encourages me to prostitution and to obtain money. Although my neighbors and the local police station know about the violence and tortures imposed on me, still harassments by my husband continue. My husband not only impose violence and torture on me, he threatens my relatives too. Due to insufficient food at home, my children suffer from malnutrition and they are in a critical condition.”

Third Case
A woman who was continually under violence and torture by her husband states:
“12 years ago I got married by force. In exchange my husband engaged his sister to my brother. From the beginning up till now he beats me and use degrading and bad language against me. After marriage, due to poverty I together with my husband went to Iran. He started beating me severely there and made baseless accusations against me. When the situation become intolerable for me, I complained to the authorities and my husband was put in jail. Then I together with my husband was deported. After returning home, he again started beating me and always threatened me to death. Now my husband is in Iran and abandoned us. Even he does not allow us to live in a safe shelter.”

4.5- Economic Violence
Due to economic dependency on their husbands and men of the family, women are usually in a situation that they have to obey and be under command of men in the family. In this way men impose their will on women without taking into consideration their consent. If there demands are not fulfilled or rejected, men resort to force and violence to achieve their goals and maintain their superiority.

Among all type violent treatments and behaviors exist in relations between men and women in the family and in the society at large; one is economic violence against women. Economic violence occurs in different forms, a portion of which is witnessed in the outputs and data collected by the AIHRC during the year 1390.
Economic violence against women is severe and deep due to harmful traditions and social customs prevailing in Afghanistan. Although women rights and privileges are envisaged in the law and Islamic Sharia, due to harmful traditions only a few women can utilize their envisaged rights. As an example we can mention the right to inheritance and Mahr (the money fixed for women during marriage) from which most of women are deprived of. As the cases and data on economic violence recorded by the AIHRC during the year 1390 show, deprivation of women from their rights to inheritance, Mahr, alimony and other similar rights is not only due to harmful traditions prevailing in the society, but men in the family and society also reject these rights of women. In many cases if women demand their rights, men resort to force and violence to deprive women from their rights. The information and data collected during the year 1390 show that a total of 785 instances of economic violence against women occurred in the country which include not paying alimony for wife and children (500), selling valuable belongings without women’s permission (53), lack of authority at home (151), taking the salary or wage of women by force (30), deprivation from the right to inheritance (25 cases), prevention from working (10), other cases of economic violence (16). The majority of cases are about refraining from alimony to wife and children. They usually occur due to other family violence and problems which cause separation and men avoid paying alimony. To get a clear picture of economic violence against women refer to the following chart.

Chart 7
As mentioned earlier, traditional customs are bigger obstacles against realization of economic rights of women in comparison to the legal obstacles. In addition it is witnessed that in many cases men resort to force and violence to prevent women from their rights. There are some cases which depicts clearly the cases of economic violence against women:

**First Case:**
Three human rights activists in Paktia province came to the Women Rights Unit and narrated about economic violence and other types of violence imposed on a woman and her daughters as following:
“A 55 year old woman, resident of a province whose husband died four years ago, now she is a widow. She has two daughters. After demise of her husband, the sons of her husband’s brother sold her daughters and divided the money among themselves. In addition they intend to sell this woman too and obtain her share of inheritance.

**Second Case:**
In this case, a victim expressed her problem as following: “Seven years ago, when I was a six month old child, my father divorced my mother and intended to sell me to someone who had no children. When my uncle became aware of this case, he took me and my one and a half year bother with him and took good care of us. For this reason we like him as our real father. My father never took care of us. Sometimes ago he made me to engage with a person who I don’t know. He has received a large sum of money from that person. When I became aware of this case, I talked to my father and expressed discontent. My father paid no attention and continually threatens me.

**Third Case:**
A woman who complains about non-provision of alimony, selling of her valuable belongings and other types violence against her narrated her story as following:
“At the age of 18, I got engaged with a man whose sister was familiar with my mother. After getting married and bearing my first child the relations and behavior of my husband changed. In addition to non-provision of alimony, he harassed me in different ways. When ask him to provide food for me and my child, he gathered the neighbors and accused me that as if I gave his daily wage (100 Afs) to my parents. In addition his sisters also harass me and finally forced me to give all my jewelries to them. Without my consent they sold my jewelries and spent all the money. The sisters of my husband spent the money received from a shared bakery and they left nothing for me and my child.
Now I receive food from charity organizations and also my mother helps me. My expectation is that alimony should be provided for me and future of my child should be clear."

The above case studies show that extensive and widespread economic violence against women exists in Afghanistan. Economic violence against women is not only limited to non-provision of alimony, depravation from the right to heritage, selling of girls and women and also selling of their prosperities. The cases indicate that a large number of cases of economic violence against women emanate from non-following up the cases of such violence and the responsible authorities pay no serious attention to prosecute the perpetrators. Look at the following case:

Fourth Case:
“I am a woman and my husband died ten years ago and now I live with my children. A man who had family relation with our district governor usurped my land and treats us in a very bad way. Sometimes before we had a problem on water quota so I complained to the district Governor, but he did not listen. Then I complained to the provincial Governor and he ordered that my case should be reviewed. When I returned to the district Governor, the Governor told me that I did not have ownership right. He threatened me and ordered his soldier to pull me by the hair and kick me out. He also kicked me on the chest and hit my head to the wall. The soldier took me out. They took me to the local clinic, but due to harsh blow, it was not possible to be treated there. My son hired a car and transferred me to Ibn-e-Sina Hospital in Kabul.

5.6: Other types of violence
Violence against women is not limited to the abovementioned types. There are other types of violence that can not be classified under the above classes.

Therefore, in the following we discuss other types of violence which are widely spread and have negative impacts on life, personality, health, social and economic condition of women. For example forced divorce, depravation from the right to choose spouse or leaving home, though are not considered as violence, they have bad impacts on personality and future of women. So they can be called violence against women.

Similarly, early marriages, expulsion from home or receiving money against marriage of girls are examples occur frequently in Afghanistan, but gradually they are changed to a normal practice and seldom considered as violence against women. In reality early marriages have bad consequences on women and from physical and psychological points of view they are not ready to take...
responsibilities of being mothers and they are not prepared for marital life. Young girls, if they are physically prepared, psychological they are not prepared for marital life.

Issues such as sexual intercourse, pregnancy, taking care of children or other complex family issues are difficult challenges for under aged girls and they are not able to handle such matters properly. Expulsion from home or obtaining a big sum of money as dowry, are other types of violence that due to negligence, non-following up and low position of women in the society, they are considered a common experience, but in reality they are violence against women.

In general, violations classified in the last category are including prevention from education (33), exchanging of women (46), Bad (5), prevention from going out (44), violation of the right to choose spouse (96), forced marriage (172), forced divorce (45), early marriages 86), taking big dowry (76), expulsion from home (243), others (59) are the types of violence against women occurred during the year 1390. To obtain a clearer picture of the last classification of violence against women please refer to the following chart:

The abovementioned forms of violence against women occurred in different parts of Afghanistan. The common factors among all types of violence against women are those harmful traditions and customs prevailing in the society. They play the key role in continuation of violence. To understand the ground for continuation of violence against women please look at the following cases:
First Case:
“I am 19 years old girl and study at Teachers Training Collage in my province. My brother who is older than me always beats me and recently he made me to engage with an old man. When he put pressure on me to get married with that elderly man I was forced to leave home. Assisted by a staff of the Interior Ministry I came to the AIHRC office to find a solution for my problem.”

Second Case:
“One year ago my father kidnapped a girl and took her to another province. My brother and I were together with him. Then he married the girl to my brother. After sometimes, the girl’s father traced and found our address. He came together with some elderly men and reconciled with my father. During this reconciliation, my father engaged me to the father of that girl. This agreement was made without my consent. Six months after this engagement, my father encouraged me to get divorce that man. I was afraid of being sold to another person; so I did not accept my father’s demand. Then my father assigned some people to beat us. We were forced to flee to another province and I was hiding there for six months. Finally my father found our address and instigated a man to claim that as if I was engaged to his son while I was two years old. My father accused me of escaping from home and now it is one month that I am in jail.

Third Case:
“It is nine years that I am married and during this long period I was under harsh treatments of my husband. He uses different types of violence against me and my children. Even he fed me together with dogs and he cut one of my fingers. One night my daughter got up to drink water. Her father hit her on the ground so hard that she died immediately. One day he cut my lip with scissors and pressed my tongue with pliers. He uses such types of violence against me that horrify me to mention.”

The abovementioned cases show a situation under which women suffer from different types of torture, ill-treatment and violation of their rights. These examples explain the most secret and shocking aspects of women’s life in Afghanistan. In spite of such crimes against women, little action has been taken to get rid of this situation. Although exchange of women, Bad and other types of violence against women can be prosecuted, in practice these violations of women rights are increasing by passing of each year.

The third case was reflected in the media and it showed that until a woman has not been affected seriously by physical or mental torture, no preventive measure would be taken to solve the problem.
Perpetrators and Place of Violence

Another question raised about violence against women is the perpetrators and places of violence. It is important to know that where the most violations occur and who are the perpetrators as well as why they resort to violence against women. The findings and information collected by regional and provincial offices of the AIHRC during the year 1390 provide clear answer to these questions. The general opinion is that mothers, fathers and brothers are not in the list of perpetrators of violence against women, but the findings by field research, especially the findings of this report show an opposite outcome. The long list of perpetrators includes those family members like daughters, sister in laws and other female members of the family. Out of 4865 instances of violence against women during the year 1390 at least 278 perpetrators are fathers, 66 instances related to mothers and perpetrators of 133 instances were bothers. Perpetrators of about 3287 instances were husbands. In another word, out of all cases of violence against women, 67.5 percent related to husbands which are the highest figures. This is a shocking figure and reveals a bitter reality in our society and it shows that no attention has been paid to that. The following chart clearly shows the high level of cases of violence against women committed by husbands in comparison with other perpetrators.

As the above chart shows, after husbands, the most cases of violence against women committed by those who had close relationship with the victims.
After parents and other relatives such as fiancé, brother, sister, and sister of husband, other persons have committed violence against women who are not relatives of the victims such as unidentified people on the streets, public places, stores, taxi drivers or on the buses. They are considered as perpetrators of violence against women and classified under the title of others.

Among the persons who commit the most cases of violence against women are those who have close relationship with the victims and usually they live in the same house with the victims. In another classification it is called family violence against women. In the next chart we see that almost 98 percent of instances of violence against women occurs in the families. This fact reveals an unpleasant and dark dimension of relations in the family. Disclosure of this reality indicates that family as a convenient and tranquil place in the society can be considered as a place for violation of the rights, especially the rights of women. Actually family is not the natural cradle of violence, but it is emanating from harmful traditions and relations prevailing in the families.

![Chart 10: Place of Violence happened](chart.png)

About the reasons that instead of love, tranquility and comfort why family environment has been changed to a cradle violence? It was clearly explained above, but now we seek for the reasons that why violence against women occurs outside the family. Continuation of violence against women outside the family again emanates from low position of women in the social, economic and political arena.
Low position of women is deteriorated further by harmful traditions and gender relations prevailing in the society. In general it causes women in the society to remain under the influence of harmful traditions and customs. As it was mentioned in the above chart, violence against women occurs in the places such as workplaces, streets, hospital, schools, universities and other public places too.

**Outcomes and Results of Violence against Women**

Although violence is an ominous phenomenon, at the same time its effects are considerably distressing.

Undoubtedly, in addition to physical, mental and psychological harms, violence against women inflicts irreparable damages on social, vocational and economic situation of women in the society. For this reason study and paying attention to the outcomes of violence against women addressed in this report are considerable.

The findings by this report as mentioned in the following chart indicate the fact that psychological damages are among the main outcomes of violence against women. In addition to mental disability and psychological damage as serious outcomes, violence against women causes other negative results.

Death, injury, physical disability, suicide, self-emulation, AIDS, prostitution and other negative effects are among serious outcomes of violence against women. Divorce, begging and addiction are other outcomes emanating from violence against women which causes the continuation of cycle of pains and calamities for women.

Violence against women which causes divorce, addiction, AIDS, mental and psychological damages, can provide the ground for family violence and breakage. In this way family tranquility and harmony will be disrupted. Continuation of violence destroys family unity and gradually disrupts family institution.
Violence Against Women In Afghanistan

Chart 11

Consequences Of Violence

- Death: 37
- Physical disability: 276
- Psychological damage: 2049
- Self-emulation: 94
- Divorce: 409
- Demand for divorce: 460
- Begging: 69
- Prostitution: 69
- Attempt to suicide: 108
- Fracture of body: 43
- Addiction: 71
- Wounding: 15
- AIDS: 15
- Other: 565
Summing up and Conclusion

Violence against women in Afghanistan is a widespread and ever increasing phenomenon which occurs repeatedly during the recent years. Physical violence against women is the most common type of violence occurs in Afghanistan. This type of violence includes wounding, beating, cutting of body members, pulling out air, burning, poisoning and other cases which are frequently imposed on women.

The current armed conflicts, victimizes the defenseless civilians especially women in this country. In this way, the victims of suicide attacks and road mines are mostly women and children. Since these attacks are usually carried out in the populated areas, crowded streets and public centers, naturally the most of victims of these incidents are women, children and other civilians.

Sexual violence against women is the second and more widespread type of violence which usually victimizes younger women in this country. This type of violence includes prostitution, forced sexual intercourse, demanding illegitimate sexual relations (degrading and harmful to the health of women), forced pregnancy, forced abortion, husbands’ affair, forced watching of pornography and other humiliating and degrading sexual treatments. Although talking about sexual issue is considered as a taboo and not discussable in the Afghan society, the findings by this report reveals a large number of sexual violations occurred in the year 1390.

Another form of violence against women is economic violence which affects social and economic life of women and finally they lose their freedom of work opportunity and decision making. Losing freedom of activities in the family and society would cause women dependency on men, especially on their husbands. Under such condition women lose their control and authority over choosing their occupations, enjoyment of their right to properties, selling of their valuable properties (if they have) benefiting from their salary or wages (if they work outside home) and they continually remain dependent. Non provision of alimony, prevention from work, selling valuable belongings of women without their permission, taking their salary or incomes by their husbands and men of the family, deprivation from the right to inheritance, having no authority at home and other similar instances are classified and counted as economic violence against women. Out of all types of economic violence against women,
refraining from paying alimony to women and their children after separation has the highest number of occurrence in the society.

Another type of widespread violence against women is verbal- psychological violence against women which are seldom revealed. This type of violence is also called white violence which occurs frequently in Afghanistan. Verbal-psychological violence against women includes insult, using degrading and bad language, making fun of, threatening to death, threatening to assault on relatives, expulsion from home, threatening to remarriage, false accusations, and threat to abandonment and other similar cases. Although verbal-psychological violence against women is the most widespread type of violence against women, it is not often considered as violent treatment and usually remains secret.

Violence against women in Afghanistan as explained in detail in this reported is not limited to the aforementioned types, but there are other types of violence, seldom revealed and classified under the abovementioned topics. Among them are cases such as exchange of women, Bad, forced marriage, forced divorce, expulsion from home, early marriage, prevention from education, prevention from leaving home and visiting relatives which are not considered as violence against women. Since this type of violence against women is repeatedly imposed on women and there has been no reaction against it, gradually they are changed to a normal behavior.

For this reason fighting against violence needs a multilateral and broad movement in different spheres of collective and personal life. Therefore, violence against women should not be counted as a mere human rights violation, but it should be addressed as big social and cultural issue which has affected our society and culture. As it was mentioned earlier, overcoming the negative phenomenon of violence against women needs serious and widespread national measures combined with consistent efforts by the institutions of human rights, women rights activists, civil society organizations and other related state organs. Simultaneous with broad national measures, mobilization of media in struggle against violence is considered necessary.
Recommendations

Legal Ground

- Amendment of the Law on Prevention of Violence against Women, especially items of this law which are vague in prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, including article 129 of this law.
- Under age engagement and forced engagement are counted as indirect violence and are the source of other violations. Therefore, it is suggested that under age engagement and forced engagement should be considered as violence against women, though the Law on Prevention of Violence against Women officially recognizes only forced marriage and under age marriage as clear violence against women.
- Registration of marriage and obtaining marriage certificate can help women in fair follow up of their complaints related to marital issues; therefore the responsible authorities should make registration of marriage and obtaining of marriage certificate as obligatory.
- In addition to registration of marriage, it is necessary to register the cases of divorce, child birth, and death of the citizens through official documents. It helps claims regarding the right of women to property and inheritance and their cases can be followed up fairly.
- Ratification of the Family Law is another mechanism for prevention of violence against women. It can settle many problems of women related to family issues against women, legal and criminal issues. Ratification of this law can prepare the ground for realization of other rights of women envisage in the laws of Afghanistan.
- The Ministry of Public Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice can devise and implement a law or regulation to register all case of violations (especially the cases which cause the victim’s death) with specifications and technical investigation to help in prosecution of perpetrators.
- Through judicial mechanisms and legal procedures, the state should protect the victims of violence against women. Since the physical and psychological victims of violence have been affected during the long years, only legal prosecution of perpetrators is not enough. The state is obliged to provide the ground for treatment of victims and devise effective mechanisms for their social integration.
The right of women to property and inheritance are two issues that should be considered. The state can decrease vulnerability of women through devising specific and transparent mechanisms and through ratification and implementation specific laws that can prepare the ground for realization of women right to inheritance and dowry (in this case the dowry should be in the form of real estate).

Punishment for violence against women has been envisaged in the Law on Prevention of Violence against Women, therefore, just prosecution of the cases and insurance of justice for the victims of violence against women can eliminate the culture of impunity which prepares the ground for continuation of violence against women.

The victims of violence against women continually suffer from remembering the horrible experience of violence; therefore establishment of counseling centers (psychological and legal) for the victims and their related families can help the decrease and elimination of violence against women.

Cultural Ground

- Awareness programs and activities by the media about harmful traditions and customs which are considered the source of violence can play an effective role in reduction and elimination of violence against women.
- Civil society institutions can and should coordinate their activities in struggle against harmful traditions and customs which prepare the ground for violence against women. They should follow clear cut policies and take effective measures in this regard.
- Religious circles such as Mullahs and preachers can condemn and alters the negative customs and traditions of forced marriages, Bad and exchange of women through mosques and make the public aware of the harmful consequences of violence against women.
- Media, education centers, schools and universities should condemn violent behaviors and beliefs to prepare the ground for expansion and promotion of humanitarian behaviors and treatments where gender differences are not used for degradation and humiliation of women.
- Topics on avoiding and rejection of violence should be included in the education curriculum of schools to make students aware of harmful consequences of violence.

Social Ground
• Violence against women in reality is a phenomenon existing inside social relations and for this reason, gender as a balance for opportunities and possibilities should be taken into consideration in national policy. Likewise, this can also be achieved through civil activities, awareness raising and following a policy of positive discrimination in the interest of women.
• Taking effective measures and devising programs for capacity building of women to participate in social activities empower women in the society. It can fill the social gaps between men and women in decision making and social activities which in turn reduce the causes of violence against women in the society and prepare the ground for overcoming violence.
• Preparing the ground for women to reach high administrative, social and political positions will provide a good opportunity to overcome on various problems of women including violence against women.

Economic Ground
• Related institutions should observe and implement laws on realization of the economic rights of women envisaged in the national laws and in this way prevent economic violence against women.
• Responsible organs should prepare the ground for removal of gender economic inequalities in economic and commercial sectors to provide work opportunities and economic activities for women. In this way potential factors of economic violence against women would be prevented.
• Related organs should give further role of participation to women in decision making and designing programs to struggle against economic violence.
• Allocation of sufficient budget for skill building and promotion of vocational training for women in the area of commerce and economic activities to release women from economic dependency.
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