



Asian-American Network
Against Abuse of Women

Ladies and gentleman,
Thank you for joining us here in New York City for an unprecedented rally. This is the beginning of a global movement to support female victims and survivors of violence and oppression in Pakistan.

Asian American Network Against Abuse of women (ANAA) is an advocacy group that seeks to create international awareness of violence against women in Pakistan.

Imagine you are a woman living in an isolated, desolate village in Pakistan; Imagine going to the panchayat (tribal council) meeting to defend your brother's case, and then imagine being dragged into a nightmare where you have to pay for your brother's so called crimes by your honor and dignity, and thus begin an uphill battle for justice. Now Imagine you are a woman doctor from Pakistan's largest urban city; imagine going on to fulfill your dreams to an underserved area and then being raped by an apparently influential person and now your nightmare results in accusations of prostitution and a forced exile from the country. These are not figments of someone's imagination, but the harrowing ordeals of Mukhtar Mai and Dr Shazia Khalid. There are thousands of other Mukhtars, and Shazias whose story will not even come out of their mouths for the fear of vindication by the society. Violence against women is rampant everywhere in the world. However, in Pakistan, it is not just the violence but the cruel justice in the form of jirga/panchayat, parallel court systems, corrupt and brutal police, use of rape as punishment and torture, acid throwing and other forms of body mutilation, honor killings, apathy of society and state and above all unjust laws like zina ordinance and qisas and diyat that we are protesting.

We have to raise our voice for those who can not speak for themselves; we have to raise our voice to join in on the silent screams of thousands of women who are struggling to get justice. We have to raise our voice against dishonorable killings – honor should not kill. Why do women have to pay with their lives and bodies for men's honor?

We are here to also raise the voice against harassment of human rights defenders by the Pakistani Government. These are people like Asma Jehangir, Anis Haroon, founders of ANAA, Mukhtar Mai and many others who are hounded and harassed by the Government agencies on a daily basis. This harassment and intimidation must stop. The Government's abuse and intimidation of human rights defenders is indicative of lack of value given to women empowerment. We cannot stand aside and let anyone abuse their power and violate human rights of those who are already oppressed.

We are told that by raising our voice against such atrocities, we are maligning the name of Pakistan. On the contrary, we are trying to improve the image of Pakistan. It is only through the mobilization of civil society that we can end such atrocities. If we remain silent, we are as guilty as the perpetrators of such crimes. ANAA's activists are not maligning the name of Pakistan. It is the cruel justice that maligns the name of Pakistan; it is the corrupt police who malign the name of Pakistan; it is the feudals who oppress and victimize the victims that malign the name of Pakistan. Mukhtar, and Shazia and don't malign the name of Pakistan. It is the President of Pakistan, General Musharraf who maligns the name of Pakistan by making the following statement only two days ago: "if you want to become a millionaire, or get a visa to Canada, get yourself raped". Is this enlightened moderation? Is this a soft image of Pakistan?

Such statements reflect the highest form of oppression and abuse of power. This statement tells you that all this talk of women empowerment and enlightened moderation by the Government of Pakistan is just that – hollow and empty words. The reality is that President Musharraf doesn't understand that rape is an act of violence and such a degrading act that no amount of money or visas in the world can compensate for the pain and suffering endured. General Musharraf by this one comment has shown us the odds that are against the women of Pakistan. We demand an apology from General Musharraf, and we urge him to stop lying to the people and stop interfering in justice by making inflammatory statements regarding victims of violence and stop protecting the rapists and punishing the victims.

Today, we are showing the world in an unprecedented rally that it is possible to build global coalition where people come together regardless of differences in race, gender, only to show the world that we care; we care about the victims and survivors of violence. We are here to raise our voice and SAY NO to Cruel Justice; SAY NO to Hudood Ordinance; SAY NO to Habra bill and Italianization of Pakistan; SAY NO to oppression of women of Pakistan; and above all SAY NO to the lies told by the Government. Sadder Musharraf mafie maango – Kaley Qanoon Murdabad (President Musharraf Must Apologize – Down with black laws).