

## EDITORIAL

## With Friends Like This...

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During a joint press conference last December, President Bush praised the visiting Pakistani president, Pervez Musharraf, for prosecuting "those who would inflict harm and pain" on the Pakistani people. "There is nobody more dedicated in the protection of his own people than President Musharraf," Mr. Bush said.

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That line may need to be run through the teleprompter again. At a time when Pakistan is supposed to be going after Al Qaeda

terrorists who make merry within the country's borders, our colleague Nicholas Kristof reports that Mr. Musharraf's government has instead arrested a victim of sanctioned gang rape for planning a visit to the United States.

Mukhtaran Bibi was sentenced by a tribal council to be gang-raped because her younger brother supposedly had relations with a woman from a higher caste. After the rape by four men, she was forced by village leaders to walk home nearly naked in front of a jeering crowd.

Ms. Mukhtaran was unbowed. She testified against her persecutors in court, started two schools in her village, established a shelter for abused women and bought a van that is used as an ambulance in the area. She has also spoken out against honor killings, rapes and other attacks on women.

Her guts in daring to oppose the feudalistic elements of rural Pakistani society earned her invitations from all over the world, including from the Asian-American Network Against Abuse of Women, which asked her to visit the United States this Saturday. But before she could get here, General Musharraf's government arrested her. Pakistan also

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released her attackers, who had been in prison since they were convicted of raping her. Pakistani newspapers report that the government, bizarrely, is worried that Ms. Mukhtaran might malign Pakistan's image if she is allowed to go abroad - as if it has not taken care of that rather ably by itself.

The Bush administration has made nice with General Musharraf in the joint interest of antiterrorism campaigns. Christine Rocca, the assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs, said in Congressional testimony yesterday that America is "dismayed" at the abuse of Ms. Mukhtaran, and that administration officials would pursue the matter during the course of the day. Let us hope this one goes straight up to Ms. Rocca's boss, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. It makes no sense for the United States to accept the kind of behavior from friends that it would not tolerate from enemies.

Being allies with Pakistan should go beyond just selling F-16 fighter jets to General Musharraf in the hope that he will one day get serious about finding Osama bin Laden and stop allowing recruiters for the Taliban to operate in Pakistan. It should also include pressing Pakistan to adopt minimum standards of human rights.

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