

NY PRESS CONFERENCE

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10:30 a.m - 12:30 p.m.

65th Street, Fifth Ave. (Westside street corner by Central Park), New York

A press conference will be held on Wednesday June 22, 2005 at 10:30 a.m at 65th Street and Fifth Ave. in Manhattan. The press conference is being sponsored by ANAA (Asian American Network Against Abuse of Women), Turning Point for Women and Families NY and Amnesty International, USA.

The press conference is being held to urge the Pakistani government to allow Mukhtaran Bibi to travel and speak freely within and outside Pakistan. Representatives of ANAA, Turning Point, Amnesty International, Human Rights First and Women In Islam will address the conference along with other well known rights advocates.

As has been widely reported in the international media, Mukhtaran Bibi endured the harrowing tragedy of being sentenced to rape by a tribal jirga, maligned by her community and yet emerged courageous and committed to improving the society around her. Tragically, she is now refused the right to speak the truth about her ordeal while all the men who raped Mukhtaran Bibi are now free.

Mukhtaran Bibi was put under house arrest on June 9 only to be spirited away for a day and reproduced at a Press Conference organized by government officials. In the Press Conference she stated that she was foregoing her invitation to the United States to attend the ANAA Symposium on Violence against Women in South Asia. In the mean time, while Pakistani government officials maintain she is "free to leave", police continue to surround her house and monitor all telephone conversations. In addition, Mukhtaran Bibi's passport has been taken and is no longer in her possession. Victimized first at the hands of a tribal jirga and gang raped by twelve men, Mukhtaran Bibi has now been made to believe that telling her story and bringing attention to the plight of women like herself would make her "an enemy of Pakistan."

ANAA is deeply disappointed at the Pakistan Government's efforts to

thwart a public advocacy campaign that aims to draw attention to thousands of women in Pakistan who are regularly brutalized that result from a collusion between discriminatory laws, a patriarchal society and an establishment that fails to implement legislative and social reforms that would end the brutalization of women. We call on the Government of Pakistan to immediately ensure that those charged with the brutal crime will not endanger Mukhtaran Bibi or her family and will be brought to justice.

The legal, physical and psychological intimidation Mukhtaran Bibi has faced in recent days as a result of her desire to come to the United States is an example of the extreme lack of value placed on women lives and well being in Pakistan. It also illustrates the repressive silence imposed on all victims of sexual violence

Together with Amnesty International, Turning Point, community and religious leaders and a range of women's advocacy and human rights organizations, we urge every one to join us in our efforts to ensure the safety of Mukhtaran Bibi and exert pressure on the Government of Pakistan to desist from their pressure tactics on her and her family, including granting Mukhtaran Bibi the freedom to speak and travel.