

Dear President Musharraf,

It may come as a surprise to the Government of Pakistan, but the world outside the corridors of power in Islamabad is well aware of the government of Pakistan's utter failure to stem the rising tide of violence against women in Pakistan. To highlight the issue of escalating and blatant violence against women, Asian American Network against Abuse of Women (ANAA), a US-based organization of expatriate Pakistanis committed to advocating the voice of the oppressed, has arranged a series of talks and seminars in the US, in summer 2005. Given her iconic status in Pakistan as a woman of courage struggling for justice, we have invited Mukhtaran Mai as one of the speakers. She is scheduled to give a series of lectures and speak at several events across the USA, to highlight the plight of women in Pakistan.

Little did we know that this move would throw the Pakistan Government into a state of frenzy. So fearful are they of the revelation of their double-speak on women's rights that they have placed Mukhtaran Mai under a virtual house arrest during the past 10 days; an irony given that her rapists are walking free. As of today, Mai is being kept at an undisclosed location by the police. We are outraged by the behavior of the Pakistani government. Ostensibly, the whole drama is being enacted to protect Pakistan's image abroad. Well, more harm is being done to Pakistan's reputation by the poor handling of Mukhtaran Mai's case. We demand that she be released immediately and be allowed to move around freely, as she, a free citizen of Pakistan, has the right to.