



UN CALLS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR CRIMES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

KABUL, 7 December 2020 - Afghan women and girls are being failed by the country's justice system with their access to justice for crimes of violence remaining tenuous, finds a new report released today by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Human Rights Office.

The report, titled, "In Search of Justice for Crimes of Violence Against Women and Girls," examines the response of the justice system and the redress provided to survivors in reported cases of violence against women and girls in the period between September 2018 and February 2020.

While acknowledging that the response by the justice system to violence against women and girls continues to improve, progress has been limited. UNAMA found that only half of reported crimes reached a primary court, with perpetrators convicted in around 40 per cent of all documented cases.

"The stark reality is that too many women and girls still fail to see justice for the violence they experience, and impunity remains far too common," said Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

One in every five women in cases documented by UNAMA decided not to pursue their case through justice channels by either not filing a complaint or later withdrawing it. The failure by State authorities to pursue crimes in such cases is particularly disturbing in cases of child marriage, as victims are unlikely to be able to independently seek recourse from the system. UNAMA monitoring underscores how many women resort to self-immolation or suicide due to violence, suggesting they feel that the justice system does not offer a realistic path to escape.

The report raises multiple concerns about the justice system's treatment of women and girls, such as low rates of conviction for so-called "honour killings" – just 23 per cent as compared to a conviction rate of 51 per cent for murders unrelated to "honour". Other issues raised in the report include the problematic handling of rape cases and the ongoing detention of women for "running away".

"Far too many times, the justice system re-victimizes survivors instead of working on their behalf. This trend must stop. Serious efforts must continue to enable women and girls to access justice and to ensure that they are treated with dignity by the justice system," said Fiona Frazer, UNAMA's Human Rights Chief and Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Afghanistan.

UNAMA calls for the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (EVAW Law) to be amended to expand authorities' powers to investigate and prosecute all crimes in the Law and for strengthened institutional responses to crimes of violence against women and girls.

Throughout the global campaign for 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence from 25 November to 10 December, the United Nations in Afghanistan is calling on everyone - national, provincial and local authorities, community and religious leaders, and individual Afghans - to increase efforts to prevent and redress violence against women and girls. This is particularly important in the context of the outbreak of COVID-19, where ongoing monitoring by UNAMA suggests that violence against women and girls has increased, as have difficulties for victims to report crimes and access safety and justice.



UNAMA Human Rights has been documenting incidents of violence against women and girls since 2010 and monitoring Government efforts to address such incidents, particularly through the implementation of the EVAW Law, 2009.

Read the full report [In Search of Justice for Crimes of Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

* * *

UNAMA supports the Afghan people and government to achieve peace and stability. In accordance with its mandate as a political mission, UNAMA backs conflict prevention and resolution, promoting inclusion and social cohesion, as well as strengthening regional cooperation. The Mission supports effective governance, promoting national ownership and accountable institutions that are built on respect for human rights. UNAMA provides 'good offices' and other key services, including diplomatic steps that draw on the organization's independence, impartiality and integrity to prevent disputes from arising, escalating or spreading. The Mission coordinates international support for Afghan development and humanitarian priorities.