



Service in Human Rights Publications



HUMAN RIGHTS POST

HRP

EDITION # 122 - MARCH 2017

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW INSIDE!

HINA PARVEZ BUTT

(Member of Parliament Punjab, Entrepreneur, Columnist, Women Rights Activist)

"Implementation on the acid throwing bill is a MUST"



MORE INSIDE!



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MEDIA SALUTING WOMEN OVER INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

THE GAPS IN LEBANON'S NEW REFUGEE POLICY

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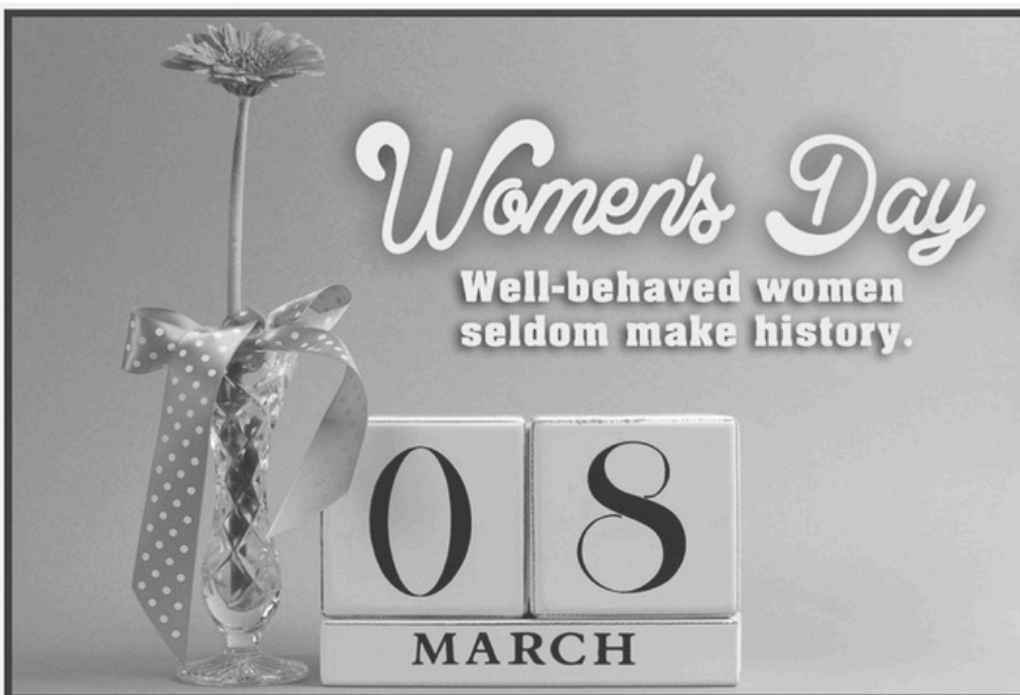
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International day for women women empowerment in Pakistan

International Women's Day is being celebrated today with the theme of Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030. In his message on this occasion, Prime Minister says that the theme of the Day calls for an effective implementation of existing and new commitments on gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights. GOVT ensures broad-based inclusion of women rights in every sphere: PM The Constitution of Pakistan supports the equal status of women and Article 18 provides equal space to women in every lawful profession. The government has taken several important initiatives to ensure broad-based inclusion of women rights in every sphere and at all levels. NA adopts Unanimous resolution paying tribute to working



women

Marriyum Aurangzeb:
(Minister of State for
Information and
Broadcasting)

The present Government deserves credit for initiating a

taken measures to increase representation of women in different spheres of life. Women constitute fifty percent beneficiaries of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. Similarly, girl educational



number of measures for effective empowerment of women. The Constitution of Pakistan and laws safeguard rights of women and the Government is implementing these provisions and laws. Apart from new legislation to protect rights of women, the Government has

institutions in Islamabad are getting priority in provision of transport facility. Constitutional and legal protections are there but it is for every citizen to play his or her role to ensure practical empowerment of women.

TehminaDoltana
(Leader, PML-N)

Quality education is a power and it is the only weapons that can never be theft. You may say that if you lack education it means you have lost power. We have been focusing on promotion of quality education in the country. Prime Minister and Chief Minister Punjab have allocated enough funds for promoting education in my constitution. We are also planning to establish a medical college along with COMSATS University. My leadership always allocated funds and



My father was my coach. He was also criticized by the people. To play for Pakistan at international level is an honor for me and I will try my level best to brighten my country's name in the world. My message to the women is come forward and play their role in best interest of the country. The working women have to face certain issues at working places and I advise to those women to just concentrate on



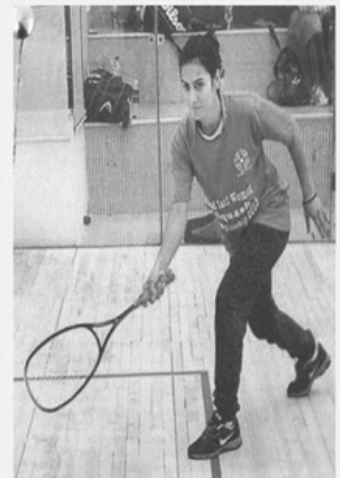
tion of these laws. Our Holy Prophet has also given the rights to women about 1400 years ago. I am here just because of education and I want every girl in my province to be highly educated. I have learned a lot in my professional life.

LailaZubairi (Artist)

all fields of life. I want to advise the parents who sent their boys abroad for higher education must also send their daughters abroad as well.

Riffat Khan (Squash Player)

I have to face many difficulties in my entire carrier. I got inspired by my sisters and got interest in squash. I used to walk to go to the club as I was



their work. Sport is another interesting field for women to do something for the country.

ShamimAkhtar
(First Pakistani Female
Truck Driver)

I am first Woman truck driver in Pakistan. I am thankful to Allah Almighty for giving us respect. Women should have to come out and earn for their families. I was seamstress for eight years and then started driving. Allah Almighty helped me in it. If any woman is needy then she should not be ashamed of coming out and earn for the families.

advised me to utilize the funds specifically for providing quality education to women. Every political party should allocate almost 5% seats for women. It is not mandatory that every sitting woman Parliamentarian comes after direct election. Our government has named four provincial ministers and three federal ministers.

Rahila Durrani
(Speaker, Balochistan
Assembly)

I would like to advise the women to get quality education and utilize their capabilities. Education provides us awareness. The incumbent government has been continuously working for women legislation. The need of time is to ensure effective implementa-

I am in showbiz for the last 31 years and earned a lot of respect from my colleagues and I am really thankful to all of them. I am here just because of their support. I started my carrier from Quetta and at that time women of the province were not aware. My suggestion and message is to bring change in the society. Girls should get quality education and play role for the country. Life is not so easy in current circumstances as it is the era of inflation. Women should have to come forward and support their families. Women are working along men in almost



not having fare for travelling.



Iraq: Hundreds Detained in Degrading Conditions

The Iraqi Interior Ministry is holding at least 1,269 detainees, including boys as young as 13, without charge in horrendous conditions and with limited access to medical care at three makeshift prisons, Human Rights Watch said today. At least four prisoners have died, in cases that appear to be linked to lack of proper medical care and poor conditions and two prisoners' legs have been amputated, apparently because of lack of treatment for treatable wounds.

Two detention centers are in the town of Qayyarah, 60 kilometers south of Mosul, and the third at a local police station in Hammam al-Alil, 30 kilometers south of Mosul. At least one detainee has been held in Qayyarah for six months, with many others detained since November 2016. According to the Qayyarah prison staff, at least 80 of their detainees are children under 18, with the youngest being 13. Children are in Hammam al-Alil as well.

"The deplorable prison conditions in Qayyarah and Hammam al-Alil show that the Iraqi government is not providing the most basic detention standards or due process," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Iraqis should understand better than most the dangerous consequences of abusing detainees in cruel prison conditions."

On March 3, 2017, Human



Rights Watch visited two of three houses in Qayyarah the Iraqi government has been using since retaking the area in August to detain men and boys suspected of being affiliated with the Islamic State (also known as ISIS). On March 12, researchers visited the local police station at Hammam al-

Alil, which is holding 225 people accused of varying crimes, including ISIS-affiliation, in four rooms. Human Rights Watch was unable to interview

detainees, but spoke to prison staff. The prisons are under the authority of the Interior Ministry's intelligence service, which provides services there together with the Justice Ministry. Staff said that Iraqi security and military services combatting ISIS hand over



people they detain to the intelligence service, which holds the detainees in the facilities while individually interrogating them.

The intelligence service then takes the detainees before an investigative judge to assess whether there is enough evidence to bring charges for supporting ISIS under Provision 4 of the Federal Iraqi Counterterrorism Law (no. 13/2005). The judge then either orders their release or transfers the detainees to Baghdad to face charges.

Prison staff in Qayyarah said they had released about 80 detainees and transferred another 775 to Baghdad by early March 2017. Iraq's Criminal Procedural Code (no. 23/1971) requires detaining authorities to bring detainees before an investigative judge within 24 hours. But Qayyarah prison staff said they had held some detainees for as long as four months, while Human Rights Watch learned of the case of the man held without charge for six months.

Prison staff in Qayyarah said that the investigative judge had cleared at least 300 men for release who are now being

held unlawfully after the National Security Service, a security body under the prime minister with a mandate to screen people fleeing ISIS-controlled areas, intervened. Security forces' failure to comply with a judicial order for release is a crime under Iraqi law. If the security forces are failing to comply with judicial orders in a systematic manner as part of a state policy to ignore such orders and detain people arbitrarily, this could represent a crime against humanity.

Prison staff in Hammam al-Alil said they had released 115 detainees and transferred another 135 to Baghdad. They said they have been holding at least 60 men since the detention site opened in November, 2016.

The prison staff and Justice Minister, Haidar al-Zamili, who met with Human Rights Watch on February 2, 2017, said that detainees held on terrorism charges have no right under the counterterrorism law (no. 13/2005) to communicate with their family during the investigation period, and that the Qayyarah detainees have not been allowed to communicate with their families. A local judge overseeing the cases told Human Rights Watch that once a detainee has been

brought before the investigative judge, they have the right to contact their families, but that family visits are being delayed because of the delays in bringing detainees before the judge.

They also said that despite the Iraqi constitution and Criminal Procedure Code (no.23/1971) guaranteeing detainees the right to a lawyer during interrogations and hearings, none had been provided with a lawyer present during their interrogations and many did not have a lawyer during their hearings before the investigative judge.

Human Rights Watch observed

that the facilities are all extremely overcrowded, so that no detainee can lie down to sleep. Because of the overcrowding and lack of proper ventilation, the makeshift prison cells are overheated, with an incredible stench. Detainees at the Hammam al-Alil prison called out to the visiting Human Rights Watch researchers, begging them to crack open the door because they said they could not breathe. The detainees have either no time or minimal time

mid-January. Prison staff in Hammam al-Alil said that on March 11, they were asked to accept another 11 prisoners but refused, saying there was simply no more room.

One interrogator in Hammam al-Alil said that he sometimes beats ISIS suspects, and an observer who visited the prison in February 2017 said he witnessed the ill-treatment of three detainees.

Detainees charged and convicted may still be entitled to release under the General

released 756 prisoners since the law was passed.

Human Rights Watch learned from a reliable source that the Iraqi government had sent a committee to review conditions in the facility a few weeks before the Human Rights Watch visit. The committee promised to send up to 20 more interrogators from Baghdad, to speed up investigations. On March 2, 2017, 10 interrogators had arrived at the Qayyarah prisons.

The evidence documented by Human Rights Watch strongly suggests that conditions at the Qayyarah and Hammam al-Alil facilities are hazardous, unfit to hold detainees for extended periods of time, and do not meet basic international standards. As a result, holding detainees there probably amounts to ill-treatment. The state of the facilities and severe understaffing pose severe risks to the prisoners, the prison administration, and the local community.

The authorities should transfer all detainees from these facilities to official prisons built to accommodate detainees, and equipped to meet basic international standards. Until that happens, the Interior and Justice Ministries should, as an urgent priority, improve the conditions, and speed up the investigative process so that it can transfer the prisoners out of the

facility as quickly as possible. The ministries should provide all detainees a medical screening upon arrival, and ensure access to medical care.

The authorities should also ensure that there is a clear legal basis for detentions, that all detainees have access to legal counsel, including during interrogation, and that detainees are moved to facilities accessible to government inspection, independent monitors, relatives, and lawyers, with regular and unimpeded access. They should immediately notify families of the detention of their loved ones and under which authority,



outside their cells, eat inside their cells, and have no access to showers and limited access to bathrooms. The facilities have no medical support, contributing to the deaths and amputations, prison staff said. While the staff said they were trying to improve conditions, they could not reduce the overcrowding. The overcrowding may have been exacerbated due to a temporary freeze, in early 2015, on transfers of prisoners to Baghdad due to the cost of such transfers, a Qayyarah court official told Human Rights Watch on March 11, 2017. He said that the transfers had resumed in

Amnesty Law passed in August 2016 (no.27/2016), staff said. The law offered amnesty to anyone who joined ISIS or another extremist group against their will, and did not commit any serious offense, like torture or killing. The head of the Iraqi parliament's legal committee, Mohsen al-Karkari, told Human Rights Watch during a meeting on February 7, 2017, that it was a roundabout way to limit the scope of the wide-reaching Iraqi counterterrorism law and release of thousands of terror suspects. According to the Justice Ministry, authorities have

promptly take detainees before a judge to rule on the legality of their detention, and immediately comply with any judicial order for release. Judges should order the release

"[a]ll accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being paid to climatic

from family and friends. Under Iraqi law, the High Judicial Council is responsible for monitoring prison conditions, while the ministries in charge of facilities are respon-

from adult detainees. Any punishment for criminal offenses should be appropriate to their age, and be aimed at their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

It is important to note that some of the child detainees may have committed acts of violence while simultaneously being victims of ISIS. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for children and armed conflict said in 2011 that when dealing with children who took part in armed groups "more effective and appropriate methods, other than detention and prosecution are encouraged, enabling children to come to terms with their past and the acts they committed."

The government should also consider how to treat children accused of membership in a group like ISIS, but not of any specific violent act. In 2016, the UN secretary-general criticized countries for responding to violent extremism by administratively detaining and prosecuting children for their alleged association with such groups. He noted that such deprivation of liberty is contrary to the best interests of the child and can exacerbate community grievances.

The special representative of the secretary-general for children and armed conflict, Leila Zerrougui, has also stated that child soldiers should not be prosecuted "simply for association with an armed group or for having participated in hostilities." Many countries worry that children who are ISIS members pose a future threat. But prosecution and detention of a child should always be a measure of last resort, and the purpose of any sentence should be to rehabilitate and reintegrate the child into society.

Qayyarah Prisons

In one Qayyarah detention facility, a room approximately 4 by 6 meters held 114 men, and in the other a room 3 by 4 meters held 38. They have no furniture or mattresses, with insufficient space for detainees



of detainees or prisoners being held in inhuman or degrading conditions.

When prosecuting children alleged to have committed illegal acts, they should be treated in accordance with international juvenile justice standards. International law allows for authorities to detain children pretrial in limited situations, but only if formally charged with committing a crime, not merely as suspects. The authorities should release all children not yet formally charged.

"The Iraqi authorities should immediately release the children it is holding in these hellholes unless they promptly charge them with a crime," Whitson said. "Iraq should recognize and treat children accused of ISIS affiliation as the victims of illegal and unconscionable recruitment and exploitation by the group." International Law on Detention

International law governing the treatment of prisoners strictly prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. The international norms regarding prison conditions are set out in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the "Mandela Rules"). The rules require that

conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation."

They also state that, "[t]he sanitary installations shall be adequate to enable every prisoner to comply with the needs of nature when necessary and in a

sible for maintaining the conditions inside. The High Judicial Council should fulfil its mandate in monitoring these facilities. Iraq should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture allowing independent international experts to conduct regu-



clean and decent manner," and that "[a]dequate bathing and shower installations shall be provided." "The provision of health care for prisoners is a state responsibility. Prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community," the rules state. Rule 58 protects a prisoner's right to receive visits "at regular intervals"

lar visits to places of detention in Iraq and provide for the creation of an independent inspectorate.

Special Provisions Regarding Child Detainees

In particular, children should enjoy full due process guarantees, including access to counsel, the right to challenge their confinement, contact with their families, and separation

to lie down to sleep. One prison houses 374 detainees within six rooms. The other facilities are smaller. The room with 114 detainees has a single toilet and blocked off windows. It had no ventilation system until early March 2017, when the prison director broke two small holes in the walls and installed ventilation fans. Despite these improvements, the smell is overwhelming. The detainees in the other five rooms share another single toilet.

The second prison houses 270

to the toilet. Staff said they took the prisoners out into the yard for 10 to 20 minutes a day, but allowed them only to sit, not walk around.

None of the three prisons have showers. The prisoners eat in the rooms.

Prison staff said they recently decided to hold child detainees separately. But Human Rights Watch was not allowed to visit a third building where staff said the child detainees were held.

Prison staff said that while conditions in the third building

Now the detainees get three varied meals a day, prison staff said.

Staff told Human Rights Watch that despite repeated requests to the Baghdad authorities, the government had not provided any medical support to the prisons for months. The first two visits by doctors from the local branch of the health department were in early March 2017. Sources said that the doctors then suspended their visits, but did not know why. They said that two detainees had entered with

February, a neighbor told them he had been at a hospital in Qayyarah, and had seen Atiya arrive there for treatment. Atiya's mother went to the hospital, where medical staff told her he had severe diarrhea from dehydration. She spent five days with him and said he was very sick and weak and finally died. When Human Rights Watch interviewed the family, they had yet to receive the results of the forensic examination.

Staff told Human Rights Watch there were ongoing



detainees in a building that was hit by a projectile while the area was under ISIS control, with a hole in the hallway roof. Staff said the building is unstable and could collapse at any moment. The room Human Rights Watch saw has windows boarded up with only a small hole, from which detainees have thrown dozens of water bottles filled with their urine. The heat and smell are staggering. Staff members are building another room connected to the building to hold some of the detainees.

The prisons that hold 374 and 400 detainees respectively each only has one guard at any given time. The prison holding 270 has two because the single toilet is a pit in the yard, which opens into a main road, so a guard accompanies prisoners

are slightly better, with less overcrowding, they do not allow the children to leave their cell. They have no opportunities for activities, exercise, diversion, education, or contact with their families. The only exception is for a small number who provide uncompensated labor for the prison staff by distributing food and water, including to the adult prisoners.

Staff said that until January 2017, the food served to detainees was inedible, and that the head of the prison finally refused to serve it, telling officials at the Justice and Interior Ministries that he would start buying food from his personal funds for the detainees. This finally triggered the ministries to send more support for better food.

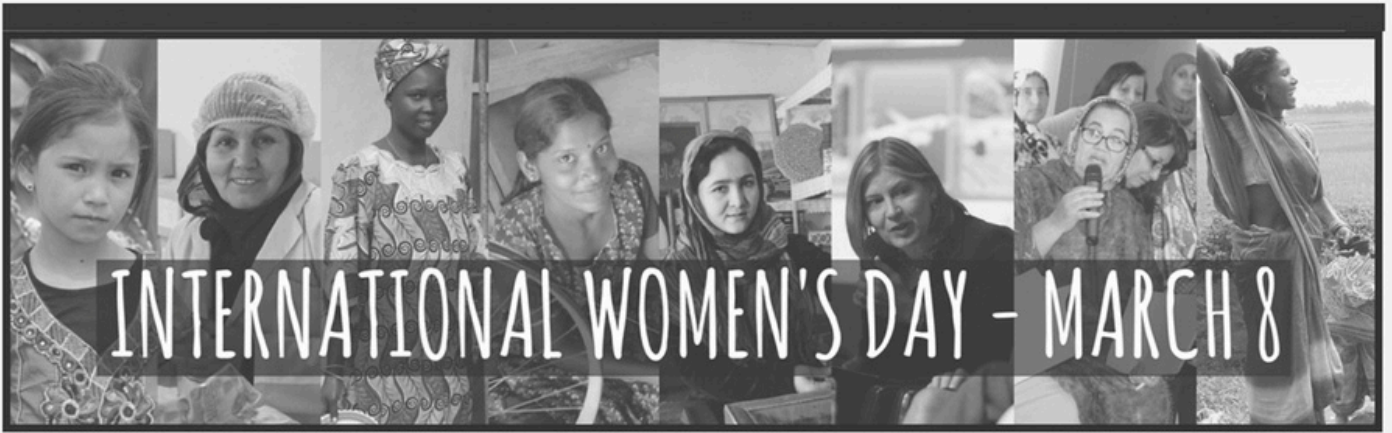
what they believed to be treatable wounds, but they were not given access to timely medical care and eventually each had needed to have a leg amputated.

The family of one prisoner, Ali Muhammad Atiya, 41, a former grocer, told Human Rights Watch that when Iraqi forces retook Qayyarah in August 2016,

Counterterrorism Service officers came to their home and detained Atiya for several hours. Four days later, intelligence officers returned and detained him, telling his son that the father had been affiliated with ISIS. The family said staff did not allow them to visit him, but that an intelligence officer told them that although an investigative judge ordered his release, he remained detained. In early

efforts to install air coolers and ventilation systems. During the week of March 12, 2017, they cleaned all the rooms for the first time to address an outbreak of scabies, allowed all the prisoners to shower in makeshift facilities set up on that day, and set up sanitation facilities for each building.

Hamam al-Alil Prison Human Rights Watch visited two of the four prison rooms in the police station, one 6 by 4 meters, holding 72 men, and the other 7 by 4 meters, holding 103. They have no furniture or mattresses, with insufficient space for detainees to lie down to sleep. The prison houses 225 detainees, including three women in a separate cell, with about 50 of the 255 on ISIS-affiliation charges.



Media saluting women over International Women's Day

International Women's Day - a day observed on 8 March every year to acknowledge women for their services and commemorating the women's rights movement - is just a reminder of how much women are contributing to this world. Like every year, this time too, this day was much celebrated over the media, creating its hype with special segments, packages and programs hosted by female anchors and inviting some distinguished women as guests.

Although women working in every field have to face challenges but media being a driving force in society is very demanding, and media jobs always come with immense work pressure and long working hours, therefore women working in media have to remain much stronger and tougher than those working in any other field.

It is ironic that media - which is always saluting the women over such occasions - is itself somehow mistreating its women by not giving them the respect and laxity they demand. Media does raise voice for suppressed women in society and is of course playing a major role in their empowerment, but what of the women who are working day and night in these media outlets and adding value to their work? These women also command respect and do not need to be treated only as a piece of attraction.

DNA reached various women working in media organisations to know how they are treated being a female entity. Here is what news anchor Neelum Yousuf of ARY News has to say about her experience in this field.

"I have been working in the field for five years and what I have experienced and seen in my surroundings is that there is always a glass ceiling for women in every field and so in media too - whether it is related to their age, beauty, or sending them in field for reporting - there are things where men are preferred over women but there are some good things too, they are given respect and added benefits. I think we should talk about them and address them so people should know what issues women have to face in news media field. We can never, at any point, say that 'she can't do this thing because she's a woman'."

Anchorperson Dua Kanwal of Express News, while telling her experience, said it has been a great journey for her so far and she has learnt a lot in her career.

"In a male dominated society there are a lot of challenges daily faced by women everywhere but a successful woman would let things go and stay firm and committed to her goals. There are many ups and downs in this field, but media is a miracle for hardworking people. I have worked for 24 hours too in my career which

shows that there is no gender discrimination as far as this field is concerned. Yes there are goods and bads in every field but you need to decide your own path. I can proudly say that women have grown up in the society and they are eager to move forward along with men or even beyond them," Kanwal said.

Here's what she said in her message for women's day.

Other than anchoring, women somehow feel the same in other media departments like reporting and production.

Mahnoor Khalid, a reporter at Dunya News, said, "What I think is that women do get benefits and comfort in office for just being a woman and yes they are treated well but on the other hand, they are equally considered dumb somehow. Women also get harassed in the field and I have experienced both. For example, if there's a tough situation, they say that a female reporter cannot go there or they doubt the authenticity of the news filed by her. Also, if a girl is pretty she is always flirted with and honestly, beauty gets a lot of chances to progress."

Asyesha Saghir, a producer at Express News, said, "In majority of the media houses, women are neglected when higher ups are appointing people on main seats and if any woman fortunately reaches the leading seat in a newsroom, people make it difficult for her to survive. If you are a woman,

you have to work a lot harder to prove your talent as compared to males. Women do face discrimination, harassment and disrespect in media but luckily, I haven't faced any misbehaviour. My organisation is one of those few channels where women are respected and have complete freedom to give her opinion and are heading many key positions." Coming to print media, where beauty is not needed to get yourself a chance, women have a greater opportunity to project their thoughts and work effectively in newsrooms but when it comes to going to the field, they also have to face the same challenges.

Sana Fatima, a blogger and former staffer at few English dailies, said, "Apparently, women are treated with respect but it can get condescending because there are certain subjects and news beats that are only handed over to men. Also, in electronic media, the way women look sometimes plays an important role in her career than her hard work and knowledge."

With all the perks and glamour it brings with itself, media is sure not an easy job. It takes a lot from a person but promises to give something in return too. Working in media needs some patience and stamina, and no doubt, all the women working for these media outlets, whether print or broadcast, have exceptional potential. However, it still needs to be realized that if a woman has made a place in this field, it is not because of her beauty or good looks but also because of the countless hours and endless effort she has put in to achieve it.

Thumbs up to all the headstrong women working in media and making it grow!

"Critics can keep on criticizing, But my aim is to be the best in the game"

Exclusive interview Hina parvez butt

Zuhair Ahmed

Q.1 Please tell the Readers in your words who is "Hina Pervez"? (An Introduction)
A. Hina Butt is one of the youngest leading business and social entrepreneurs as well as



various obstacles that women in her country generally face, is a young female Member of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab, Pakistan, and has worked actively in the areas of women and labor rights. She is the Health Coordinator of the Women Parliamentary Caucus of Punjab and the General Secretary of the Youth Caucus. Hina also contributes regularly for columns in Daily Times and The Nation and Jang.

Q.2 What do you think is the Right way to spread

else it would be very difficult, to implement laws its very

important to Many laws exist but lack of implementation of the laws and no awareness awareness campaign to educate the women of their rights.

Lot of laws exist but there is no awareness campaign so these women know what laws have been passed for them and what are their actual rights. The implementation of these laws is also very weak and no proper awareness campaign is done to educate these women on their rights.

What the

influential politicians in Pakistan. She is the founder, owner and head designer at a thriving women luxury fashion brand in Pakistan, which operates locally and internationally. Hina holds an MBA with Dean's Honor Shield from the Lahore University of Management Sciences and has recently completed her Masters in International Relations from the University of Middlesex in Dubai. As a social entrepreneur, Hina has effectively used her fashion brand, Teena by Hina Butt, as a platform for social development by providing vocational training to underprivileged women in Pakistan to generate more female entrepreneurship. She has been working in a close collaboration with Faces Pakistan to empower women belonging to the rural areas of the country. Hina, overcoming

Women Rights? or Laws?

I think it's the media, I strongly believe the media these days are the main aspect we women are being portrayed in a much better society or



Punjab Government has achieved so far. The establishment of Women Development Department, the Office of Women Ombudsperson and Punjab Commission on the Status of Women are, beyond any doubt, our landmark achievements

public sector companies, regulatory bodies, special task forces and committees at decision making level.

o Under the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016, the government is establishing Violence against Women (VAW) Centers in

by the Women Development Department at various public and private sector institutions to facilitate working women.

o Employment quota for women in Public Sector was enhanced from 5% to 15% in 2012.

o Maternity leave rules were

o Out of 7.9 million beneficiaries of the Health Insurance Scheme, 4.1 million (57%) are women.

o 49,000 lady health workers have been regularized.

o Establishment of help desks exclusively for women in 98% of police stations across the province.

o Interest free loans to the tune of Rs. 12.70 billion have been given to over six lacs women in the province. Besides, 106,000 women have been given skill-related trainings.

o Out of 175,000 scholarships provided under the PEEF, 119,313 scholarships have gone to female students.

Q. As an MPA what is your Future plans for Women of Pakistan?

o Start projects for the socio-economic growth of the province. Open vocational training centre for women so that they learn skill based training. Provide them with interest free loans so they become financially independent. Try to Get the Home based Workers bill passed and make sure their is implementation on the Acid throwing bill and proper implementation of women protection I'll.

o promote gender equity in all areas concerning women especially health, education, governance, and employment etc.

o We will continue to build upon our provincial initiatives and meaningful programs for empowerment of women with



and initiatives. Besides, Women Empowerment Packages 2012, 2014 and 2016 have gone a long way in empowering women in a meaningful manner.

o Inheritance laws were amended to eliminate legal loopholes and discriminatory procedural practices to ensure women's right to inheritance.

o Punjab Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2012 was passed and resultantly office of Ombudsperson was created for adjudication of harassment complaints. Constitution of Anti-Harassment Committees in all departments and district governments to inquire into complaints of harassment were also formed.

o Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2014 led to creation of an independent Punjab Commission on the Status of Women.

o The Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act 2014 was passed that amended 66 laws to provide up to 33% representation of women in

Punjab to protect women from physical, economic, and psychological violence. First such Center is being established at Multan.

In addition to the legal

recourse, various actions led to provision of enabling environment for women to work and pursue their careers. Moreover, a number of trainings were imparted to diversify the skill-set of women.

o A dedicated Women Development Department (WDD) was created with a mandate to implement Punjab Women Empowerment Packages and to align government

policies towards gender mainstreaming and equality.

o 75 Day Care Centers and 16 hostels have been established

amended in 2012 under which leave is automatically considered approved upon submission of application to immediate superior.

o 3 years' age relaxation over



and above prescribed relaxation as a special dispensation to women has been notified in 2012.

the same zeal and zest. We are committed to facilitating women in all walks of life, both in rural and urban areas,

to help them stand upright in society with dignity and honour.

o With an excellent record and many milestones covered, we continue our quest for excellence with incessant efforts and improvements in all diverse fields for women's empowerment, eradication of poverty, and ending all forms of discrimination, violence, sexual harassment and illiteracy.

Q.5 You have worked directly with Maryam Nawaz Sharif who itself is an Icon for Women Rights and very less people know she is an amazing activist, How was your experience working with her?

I worked with her Under The

Prime Minister's Youth Programme she is a powerful female voice in Pakistan and is active in promoting the rights of women and youth. Being one of the most influential women in Pakistan she has a magnetic and charismatic personality and was amazing to work with. She is staunchly working for women rights and was nominated a Young Global Leader 2013 by World Economic Forum owing to her hard work and public support in the General Elections 2013 and in general politics.

Q.6 Your a fashion related Personality, then why politics? I am a business entrepreneur and a strong advocate of entre-



preneurship and especially for women that they want to be empowered they should be financially independent. So I set up a business and as I wanted to make a difference in society with my brand also I started Training other fresh graduates to start up their own business. I also Used the brand's platform to Collaborate with Faces Pakistan in a venture with the objective of providing support to educate and train rural women in enterprise development. And Engaged in different projects under the light of a much-needed strategy to promote the culture of entrepreneurship and training Home Based workers.

But to make a difference on the large scale I knew I had to come in politics. I wanted to bring a change for women and for minority so When I got a chance to become MP I was very happy as I could get a chance to raise their voice in the assembly floor, submit legislation and make policies that were pro women empowerment work with NGO to achieve my goal.

Q.7 What do you think about the BILL passed on Honor Killings?

Getting the Honour killing bill passed was a huge step. The legislation on honour killings introduced strict punishment for the convicts making it tougher than the ordinary murder case. Under the new law relatives of the victim would not be able to pardon the killer. It's a great step and achievement for women.

Q.8 Who has been your inspirations?

o Margaret Hilda Roberts Thatcher the "Iron Lady."

o Benazir Bhutto

o Kalsoom Nawaz

o Maryam Nawaz.

Q.9 What is your message for the Girls who are inspired by your efforts in Politics?

Each girl should do their bit for women empowerment. It's their right to be educated it's not a privilege on them. It's their right to work. Strong women don't bring each other down but empower each other. They should come into entrepreneurship and pursue what their talent. They should become more patriotic and activists and also More girls should step into politics we are the enablers of change. Ensuring protection of human rights is an integral part of our duty So while we ensure that no human rights violations are done and if we cannot stop them we should report them. And stand again them "You have got to do the right thing even if it is painful. Set your course and take the difficult decisions - because that is what needs to be done."

Q.10 A Message for Human Rights Post Readers?

Great work is being done by the Human Right Post Readers in spreading the Human Rights message. The organisation is doing a remarkable campaign in highlighting people who are working for Human Rights Also actively taken up the cause of human rights and spread the noble message far and wide.

The Women who escaped ISIS

Dressed in fitted slacks, a satin bomber jacket with a fake fur collar, and a black scarf that loosely framed her face, Nadia, 22, spoke in a dull monotone of her journey from life under the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) to life in a Kurdish prison. She said she had not seen her three-year-old daughter since she fled her abusive husband, a fugitive ISIS member, in March.

A Sunni Arab from the Salahuddin Governorate in central Iraq, Nadia—whose name has been changed to protect her identity—was married off to a local farmer in 2012. Although their marriage was arranged, they got along at first, she told me from the visiting room of an Erbil prison. But everything changed for the worse when ISIS took over their village for two months in 2014.

What happened next underscores the serious challenges the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) faces as it seeks to identify security threats among the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis streaming across its borders from ISIS-held territory and to prosecute those who were part of the extremist group. During this difficult process, there is a risk that the KRG may be arbitrarily branding many women and even children who lived under ISIS as guilty by association—including those who had not welcomed the extremist group or were abused during its harsh rule.

Many residents fled Nadia's

village when ISIS took over. But Nadia said that her husband insisted they remain to care for their cattle. After Iraqi forces routed ISIS a few months later, village elders returned and banished them and others who had not run away, accusing them of being ISIS sympathizers.

The couple moved with their infant daughter to Mosul, and there her husband, unable to find other work, did join ISIS as a checkpoint guard. Although he initially joined to

its enforcers tried to make Nadia reveal his whereabouts. When she refused, she said, the enforcer hit her on the head with his rifle and threatened to kill her. Her in-laws feared for her life and persuaded her to let them smuggle her and her daughter into Turkey to join her husband.

She and her daughter reached Turkey after a weeks-long journey involving two sets of smugglers, crossing first into Syria on the back of a truck in a cage hidden beneath bags of

Turkish border into what she thought was a sanctuary: Iraqi Kurdistan, whose troops are a key force in the international coalition fighting ISIS. But during a search of the bus she was traveling in, Asayish, the security arm of the KRG, arrested her after finding what they considered to be incriminating photos on her phone. One showed her wearing a black cap with the ISIS logo. "It was a joke, a terrible joke," Nadia said of the photo, insisting she was not an ISIS mem-

ber or sympathizer. The photo showed her fully made up with her hair down. "It was an insult to ISIS, as women should cover their faces and not wear make-up," she told me. "If [members of ISIS] had seen this photo, they would have slaughtered me." Another photo showed Nadia's husband sporting a flowing beard and posing with an assault rifle. Nadia said she

immediately told the Asayish agents that the photo was of her husband, that he had been an ISIS member, and that she was fleeing him. "Why would I keep that photo of my husband if I wanted to protect him?" she said she asked the agents. They did not believe her.

Now in her 12th month of detention at the Women and Children's Reformatory in Erbil, Nadia is charged with participation in a terrorist group, which carries a sentence of up to 15 years. For the first 17 days of imprisonment, she said, security agents held her in isolation in a dank cell



support his family, said Nadia, he became increasingly "brainwashed" and quickly turned "aggressive," beating her routinely. "He didn't beat me until he joined ISIS," said Nadia. "They changed him, they spoiled his mindset." When she said she would leave him, he threatened to either kill her or take away their daughter. But when ISIS began pressuring Nadia's husband to become a frontline fighter, he refused—and was beaten and jailed by the group for two months. The day after his release in November 2015, he fled to neighboring Turkey. After ISIS discovered his escape, one of

sand and soil. "The guards would poke the soil with a stick to see if there was anything beneath it," Nadia said. Terrified her daughter would cry, she said she reluctantly doped her with cold medicine. But she survived that trip only to be battered anew by her husband. "He beat me again and again and again," Nadia told me. When he discovered she was plotting to return to Iraq with their daughter, "he threw me out of the apartment and closed the door in my face," refusing to let her take their daughter with her.

Alone and terrified, she said she crossed the southern

in an unsuccessful attempt to make her confess allegiance to ISIS. Solitary confinement for more than 15 days can constitute inhumane treatment and in some cases torture under United Nations standards. Her cell had no heat. The toilet was broken, and the two tiny windows were located near the ceiling. "They wanted to pressure me [into confessing]," Nadia said. "I wanted to kill myself. I was crying and begging, 'Please, get me out of

months to eight years, were living inside the prison with them. DindarZebari, the KRG liaison for nongovernmental organizations, denied any abuse of detainees and said that the KRG does its utmost to uphold the rights of the accused. Legal proceedings for terrorism-related cases tend to be more complex and take longer than those for common crimes, he said. Zebari insisted that the photos on Nadia's phone were,

ventilated cell with the other female prisoners. Prison staff said the cell, housing 24 people, was built for half that number.

One of the prisoners, Yasmine, had been a 16-year-old widow when KRG forces caught her trying to enter Erbil wearing a suicide vest in 2008. Yasmine, who also did not want to disclose her real name, told me that al Qaeda in Iraq had recruited her by barraging her with messages and calls saying that U.S. forces had killed her husband and that she needed to avenge his death. Twenty months have passed since Yasmine completed her seven-year prison term, but she remains in jail. The KRG authorities, she and a family member said, had accused her of developing links to ISIS during her years in detention and would not let her leave prison, even though a judge had ordered her released for lack of evidence.

Among the women awaiting charge or trial, one said she was detained because her son had joined al Qaeda in Iraq a decade earlier, although she had cut off all contact with him since then because he had joined the extremist group. Another woman said that she was related to a prominent ISIS member but had never even spoken with the relative and had seen him only once in her life, at a family gathering

killed one or more of their family members. Three women, including Nadia, said they had left their husbands because the men joined ISIS and that their spouses had threatened and beaten them or taken their children away in retaliation.

Nadia is scheduled to go to trial on April 18. But she is charged under the KRG counterterrorism law of 2006, which lapsed last July, potentially leaving her in a legal limbo, along with many of the 1,500 other Iraqis the KRG says it is holding as ISIS suspects.

As the KRG authorities try to get to the bottom of cases like Nadia's, it's critical that they base their findings on credible evidence and resist assuming guilt by association. The challenge of keeping the region safe from groups such as ISIS is immense, but it does not absolve authorities of the responsibility to afford suspects the due process rights to which they are entitled under domestic and international law.

As a start, the KRG should prioritize impartial investigations into the merits of the accusations against these women and ensure they are afforded full, fair-trial guarantees, including adequate counsel. They should enforce a zero-tolerance policy toward forced confessions or other detainee abuse. Other



here." For four months, Nadia said, she could not make phone calls or take family visits. When we spoke in December, the KRG had still not provided her with a lawyer, and she said she had seen a judge only once.

AT THE REFORMATORY Nadia was one of ten women detained on terrorism-related offenses whom I interviewed at the Women and Children's Reformatory. Two of the women had been convicted for trying to commit suicide bombings—one of them in 2008—and readily admitted this was the case. But the other eight women claimed that their only crime was being related by marriage or blood to a member of ISIS or its precursor, al Qaeda in Iraq.

Many of the eight women said they had not been provided with a lawyer, as required under Iraqi law. They had spent anywhere from one to nine months in prison without charge or trial. International law requires that detainees be charged "promptly," a period that should not exceed a few days or, at most, a few weeks. Six of the women's children, ranging in age from ten

in fact, "an indication of [her] support for ISIS." He said a court would provide her and all others accused with lawyers if they could not hire one.

In a positive step for justice, on February 22, an Erbil court dismissed a case against Bassemadawish, a Yazidi mother of three who had been enslaved and raped by an ISIS emir. The KRG had accused Darwish of complicity in the killings of three KRG peshmerga by ISIS fighters in October 2014. Darwish told the court an Asayish interrogator had beaten her and threatened her with rape if she did not confess to a role in the killings. Still, justice had been slow in coming: Darwish waited 28 months in prison to go to trial. And her case is not yet over: she remains in custody during a 30-day window for the KRG to decide whether to file an appeal and will most likely remain locked up pending the outcome of her case should it do so.

The women and children I met at the Erbil reformatory had frequent access to a large courtyard. But much of the time the mothers and children were crowded into a poorly



in 2002. A third woman said that she and her husband, a former Iraqi police officer, were detained as ISIS suspects because their home was the only one in their village that ISIS had not destroyed; she said that was because ISIS had taken over the house and kicked them out.

Two women said that ISIS had

members of the international coalition fighting ISIS should press the KRG to do so as well; otherwise they risk dirtying their own hands. Settling for anything less risks victimizing women who have already suffered under ISIS and fuels the ISIS narrative that the KRG and its allies are foes, not friends, of Iraqi Arabs.

Thailand: Investigate Army Killing of Teenage Activist

Thai authorities should immediately and transparently investigate the shooting death of a teenage ethnic Lahu activist who had been detained by the military, Human Rights Watch said today. Chaiyaphum Pa-sae, 17, was shot to death on March 17, 2017 after soldiers apprehended him for alleged drug possession in Chiang Dao district of Thailand's northern Chiang Mai province.

Soldiers from the army's 5th Cavalry Regiment Task Force and the PhaMuang Task Force reported to the district police that they stopped a car at Ban RinLuang village checkpoint in which Chaiyaphum was a passenger. Soldiers claimed that a search found 2,800 methamphetamine pills hidden in the car's air filter. Chaiyaphum and the driver, Pongsanai Saengtala, were detained while the soldiers continued to search the car.

The soldiers said that Chaiyaphum escaped from the soldiers, pulled a knife out of the car's trunk, fought his way past them, and ran into the nearby jungle. Soldiers claimed that they pursued him and when Chaiyaphum was about to throw a hand grenade at them, shot him in self-defense. They have not explained how a detained person obtained the knife or grenade. The coroner confirmed that Chaiyaphum was struck by an M16 assault rifle round that pierced his left arm and struck his heart.

"The claim that soldiers killed an outspoken young ethnic activist in self-defense after he had been held by soldiers sets the alarm bells ringing," said Brad Adams, Asia director. "Instead of accepting at face value the account of the soldiers who shot Chaiyaphum, the authorities need to thoroughly and impartially investigate this case and make their findings public."

Chaiyaphum was a well-known activist from the Young Seedlings Network Camp in Chiang Dao district. He was involved in numerous campaigns to promote the rights of ethnic Lahu and other vulnerable ethnic minorities in northern Thailand to gain citizenship, health care, and access to education. He also spoke out against abuses by Thai security

forces as far as possible apply nonviolent means before resorting to the use of force. Whenever the lawful use of force is unavoidable, the authorities should use restraint and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offense. Lethal force may only be used when strictly unavoidable to protect life. In cases of death or serious injury, a detailed report shall be sent



forces against his community during anti-drug operations. In addition, Chaiyaphum was a documentary producer and music composer. Several of his short films, including "A Comb and A Buckle," were shown on the Thai PBS channel.

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force



and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, which apply to soldiers acting in a law enforcement capacity, state that security forces shall

promptly to the competent authorities responsible for administrative review and judicial control.

In addition, the Thai government has an obligation under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders to ensure that any individual or group working to protect and promote human rights is able to work in a safe and enabling environment.

The Thai army has a long-standing practice of dismissing allegations of serious abuses committed by its troops. Despite numerous complaints about human rights violations by soldiers and army-affiliated militia groups during anti-drug operations, the army has rarely prosecuted military personnel for such offenses.

Human Rights Watch documented numerous extrajudicial killings and other serious human rights violations during then-prime minister

Thaksin Shinawatra's "war on drugs" in 2003 and 2004. Abusive anti-drug operations by the armed forces and police continued across Thailand under successive governments after Thaksin was ousted in a military coup in 2006. Many of those killed were members of ethnic populations in northern provinces who were known to have disputes with local authorities and who had consequently been blacklisted as suspected drug traffickers. Many of them were killed at checkpoints or soon after being summoned to report to local military bases or police stations for questioning.

Human Rights Watch's findings were echoed by the 2007 Independent Committee for the Investigation, Study and Analysis of the Formation and Implementation of Drug Suppression Policy (ICID), chaired by former Attorney General Khanitna Nakhon, and in National Human Rights Commission reports.

The government should immediately direct the Department of Special Investigation to investigate Chaiyaphum's death, and also request the National Human Rights Commission to investigate the case. Human Rights Watch also urged the government to ensure the safety of witnesses in this case, including the driver of the car, Pongsanai, who is now detained at Mae Taeng Prison in Chiang Mai province.

"Abusive officials have long used anti-drug operations to cover their attacks on activists who exposed official wrongdoing or defended minority rights," Adams said. "Ethnic minorities in Thailand will never have full equality so long as those acting on their behalf face grave risks every day and killings such as this are not investigated properly."

Women in democracy: Three-day international conference kicks off in Pakistan

Pakistan is hosting female lawmakers from 12 countries at a conference aimed at emphasising the role of women in strengthening democracy.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the daughter of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, opened the three-day gathering on 'The Role of Women Parliamentarians in

Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice' on Monday.

The event has been organised by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in the country. Maryam Nawaz saluted the group for taking the initiative for the venue.

International Women's Day: 'Women have made great achievements'

Addressing the conference, she said it is high time to work for women's empowerment for the betterment and development of societies.

Maryam Nawaz said that the Women Parliamentary Caucus has been playing a major role in the empowerment of women in Pakistan.

She said Pakistan today is full of extraordinary individuals who have done great jobs in different fields such as education and served the country.

Although women in Pakistan make up more than half of the total population and despite the fact, enjoy few rights and are still hugely discriminated against, the premier's daughter claimed that Pakistani women have equal opportunities in its democratic set-up.

Women lawmakers from Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, Australia, Romania, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Maldives, Indonesia and Nepal are attending the event, along with those from Pakistan.

The conference will continue

during the next three days in the federal capital.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister's daughter, on Monday said the Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was playing an important role in championing the cause of women and their global empowerment.

Addressing the three-day international conference organised

and the Women Parliamentary Caucus for organising the conference with an objective to highlight fundamental issues of rights and responsibilities, and also to add the voice of Pakistani and South Asian women to the universal discourse.

Maryam thanked WPC Secretary Shaista Pervaiz Malik for paying tribute to her

women as they struggled for their basic rights, health, economic opportunities and social freedom.

"We must recognise the gap and strengthen the state in providing adequate protection to the disadvantaged communities for equitable roles alongside men and against discrimination," she said.

Maryam said, "We must not allow a weakened status for women in societies."

She said it was fortunate to belong to a religion that encouraged family values, adding that with those values, the goals of justice and freedom of thought could be achieved.

"We, as nation, aspire to be freed from the tyranny of dictatorship, free of poverty and fear," she added.

Maryam said Pakistan was today home to remarkable individuals, who were full of courage and dedication.

She mentioned the contributions of the youngest winner of Nobel Prize

Malala Yousufzai, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy as first Pakistani to win Academy Awards and first woman pilot Maryam Mukhtar.

She said a strong tradition of female leadership existed back to the era of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) with his wife Khadija as a businesswoman, and later Fatima Jinnah, who worked alongside Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for Pakistan.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, former NA Speaker Dr Fehmida Mirza, women parliamentarians and international delegates from 16 countries, members of civil society and academia attended the event.



by Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) here, Maryam said women parliamentarians holding a unique position could prove as an agent of change in societies.

They were the leaders, who could redefine democracy and ensure social justice in the times to come, she added.

Maryam urged the women parliamentarians to become a harbinger of good news for their female compatriots by championing and encouraging them.

"The person behind a successful woman is not necessarily a man, but could be a tribe of women," she said, adding that healthy dialogue and unity would make women stronger.

She felicitated National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq

mother Begum Kalsoom Nawaz and said she indeed was a wonderful mother and it was her legacy that she herself was trying to carry forward and uphold.

She mentioned that women in many parts of the world faced problems which were punctuated by honour killings, emotional torture and violence.

She said even in developed parts of the world, women were working harder but being paid less as compared to men.

"Every woman sitting here is a living icon of struggle, resilience and courage and the problems could be overcome by the upstanding women like you," she said.

Maryam Nawaz said immense problems were faced by

'Your Children Will Die if You Don't Stop'

Michel Togué, a lawyer in the African country of Cameroon, has received death threats for defending lesbians and gays. This one, like the others, came anonymously "We know that your wife is now shopping in the mall. We know your children are now standing in front

activist, Eric Lembembe, was brutally murdered. In 2010, we published a report on the situation of lesbians and gays in Cameroon. In Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, I had meetings with the prime minister, with the justice minister, members of parliament and with representatives of the

ed to report back to the members of the two Cameroonian human rights organizations. About 20 young people listened intently to our account of the meetings and were impressed that we had had a conversation about homosexuality with the prime minister and the justice minister. That had never happened before.

I invited Michel Togué to come to the Netherlands to lecture about the plight of LGBT people in Cameroon. He also spoke about the threats against him. The president of the Amsterdam Bar sent a letter of protest to his Cameroonian colleague, but to no avail. Nobody wanted to defend or protect Togué in his own country.

A year after Eric Lembembe was killed, several Cameroonian organizations sharply criticized the dysfunctional police investigation and expressed their fear that there was no political will to shed light on the circumstances of Lembembe's killing. No one

US. So not only gays and lesbians are victims of homophobia.

But in the threatening climate in Cameroon, Toguechose to stay. He knew that the people he represented need lawyers more than ever.

He decided not to close his law office in Cameroon, and he stayed in his country. He always says: "I cannot abandon the lesbian and gay community. They are entitled to be represented in court because human rights are universal and apply to everyone."

Michel Togué and Alice Nkom are the only two lawyers in Cameroon who have been representing the LGBT community for many years. In such a hostile environment this calls for tremendous courage. In spite of death threats, in spite of bureaucratic obstruction, they keep on doing their work. They are often the last resort for lesbians and gays in peril. Often their clients are very poor and Togué and Nkom provide them with pro bono

legal assistance.

Their perseverance has had impact. The last few years the number of arrests of lesbians and gays in Cameroon has dropped significantly. Both lawyers are very dedicated to their work at great personal expense. That's why

they deserve the Dutch Geuzenpenning Award 2017.

"Is there really hope for us?" one of the young activists asked back in 2010 after hearing about our meetings with Cameroonian officials. In part because of the courage of Togué and Nkom, the answer is "yes."



of their school. They will die if you don't stop." After the death threats began, he requested help from the Lawyer's Association in his country, but their president said: "Stop defending the LGBT community and you won't have problems anymore."

Togué filed a complaint with the police, but they laughed him away, saying, "Don't defend those faggots." He did not receive any protection.

On March 13 Togué, together with his colleague Alice Nkom, received the prestigious Dutch Geuzenpenning Award 2017 in Vlaardingen, the Netherlands for their courageous work. We know just how courageous they have been and how well-deserved this

award is because Human Rights Watch has collaborated with these lawyers for years and documented how dangerous it is to be gay or lesbian in Cameroon.

Between 2010 and 2013 we documented 28 arrests for consensual same-sex conduct in Cameroon, and in 2013 an

United Nations. During all my meetings I was accompanied by the leaders of two Cameroonian human rights organizations, Alternatives Cameroon and ADEPHO, and the Dutch ambassador. Our message was the same in

all our meetings: Repeal the law that criminalizes homosexual conduct with a maximum prison sentence of five years, and stop arresting lesbians and gays in the meantime.

After all the meetings, we went to an outdoor café close to the Parliament building. We wanted to report back to the members of the two Cameroonian human rights organizations. About 20 young people listened intently to our account of the meetings and were impressed that we had had a conversation about homosexuality with the prime minister and the justice minister. That had never happened before. I invited Michel Togué to come to the Netherlands to lecture about the plight of LGBT people in Cameroon. He also spoke about the threats against him. The president of the Amsterdam Bar sent a letter of protest to his Cameroonian colleague, but to no avail. Nobody wanted to defend or protect Togué in his own country. A year after Eric Lembembe was killed, several Cameroonian organizations sharply criticized the dysfunctional police investigation and expressed their fear that there was no political will to shed light on the circumstances of Lembembe's killing. No one



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After all the meetings, we went to an outdoor café close to the Parliament building. We wanted

has been arrested and convicted for this murder.

As the death threats against Togué and his family escalated, he was left no other choice but to seek asylum for his wife and kids. The US government during the Obama administration granted them refugee status. His family now lives in the

ISIS Sex Slave Survivor: Terror Group Says Raping Underage Girls Is OK 'Under Islamic Law'

Human rights activist Nadia Murad, who was held captive by the Islamic State terror group

about the horrors she endured, added that her mother and six of her brothers and stepbrothers were executed.

passed around to various IS militants, at one point even being gang-raped until she passed out.

against IS' practice of selling young girls as slaves.

"They sold girls, girls that were underage, because ISIS considered that permissible under Islamic law," Murad revealed. "They came not just to attack certain people, but they came for all Yazidis."

Previously, Murad said that some of the things IS is making women do are "more difficult than death," adding that she was raped by 12 men.

"The last man who bought me said he would take me to someone from Syria. He went to buy clothes for me and there were no guards in front of his house; he told me to prepare because he was going to rape me," she said.

Christians and other religious minorities have suffered great atrocities in IS' captured territory in Iraq and Syria, with former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declaring the radical terror group's actions a "genocide" back in 2016.

International human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, serving as Murad's counsel, said that despite such declarations, not a single court anywhere around



and gang-raped and forced to watch the execution of several of her family members, says the radicals use Islamic law to justify their selling and rape of underage girls.

"Early morning on Aug. 3, 2014, they attacked us," Murad said in a CNN interview, describing the scene when she was kidnapped from her home in Sinjar, Kurdistan.

"Nearly 6,500 women and children from the Yazidi were abducted and about 5,000 people from the community were killed during that day. For eight months, they separated us from our mothers and our sisters and our brothers, and some of them were killed and others disappeared."

Murad, who has spoken before the United Nations and several human rights organizations

As an unmarried woman, she was taken as a sex slave and

She eventually escaped and has since been speaking out



the world has yet successfully prosecuted IS members. Clooney has asked the U.N. directly to pressure the

with Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb., admitted that more work remains to be done. "We're in a somber moment,"

minorities return to their homelands without fear of persecution. Fortenberry agreed that those

where the militants have sold and bought thousands of women and children. Taha told reporters in New Delhi, India, where she participated in a talk titled "The New Wave of Global Terror," that IS captured her during an attack on her village in which her father was killed.

She finally managed to escape IS captivity after her relatives paid money to smugglers who found her and helped her out. The sex slave survivor was speaking at the event to warn youth in India who are considering leaving their homes to join IS after news reports earlier this year revealed that dozens of youths in India were making that decision.

Taha told youngsters to beware of IS, however, pointing out that the terror group is known for trying to indoctrinate people online.

Taha, alongside fellow Yazidi survivor Nadia Murad, received the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in October 2016 for her courage in speaking out against the atrocities she suffered at the hands of IS.

Parliament President Martin Schulz said at the time that the prize shows that the women's fight "has not been in vain and that we are prepared to step up to the plate to help them in their fight against the hardship and brutality perpetrated by this so-called Islamic State to which so many people are still exposed to."

Yazidis, Christians, Arab women and others have suffered rape, torture and enslavement at the hands of IS, with a Human Rights Watch report from February revealing the horrific abuses six Sunni Arab women suffered.

One 26-year-old woman, identified as Hanan, who was arrested along with with 50 other women in April 2016 by IS jihadists in Qayyarah, revealed that she was raped in front of her children.

"The same guy raped me every day for the next month without a blindfold, always in front of my children. My daughter suffers from an intellectual disability so she doesn't really understand what she saw, but my older son brings it up often. I don't know what to do," Hanan said of her ordeal.



Security Council into setting up an investigation in Iraq to start collecting evidence.

"So, my message to the U.N. was, this is a global threat. It needs a global response. And part of that response must be a judicial one. It cannot be only on the battlefield. You can't defeat ISIS on the battlefield alone, because you have to also deal with future recruiting," she added.

"And I think trials and exposing the brutality of ISIS and trying to make a dent in some of their shiny propaganda by showing that it's not a holy war and showing what they're really doing to children, to women, is one way to help that."

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., who co-sponsored the House version of the genocide bill

Fortenberry said, according to Catholic News Service.

who were "accessories to genocide" must be "brought to



"The injustice continues. We cannot stop. ... We have a concern about resecuritization," he added, referring to helping

justice so that it never happens again."

LamyAji Bashar Taha, a young Yazidi woman who was forced to live as a sex slave for 20 months and left visually impaired with a disfigured face, has called her Islamic State captors "monsters," confirming stories about their abuse of children as young as 9 years old.

Taha was sold to IS terrorists five times, CNN-News18 reports, and along with other captured women and children was forced to make weapons and suicide vests. She made several attempts to escape, but was recaptured and forced to suffer harsh punishment and abuse.

"They (IS) are monsters," she said, recounting the radicals' physically abuse of children.

The terror group, which still holds territory in Iraq and Syria, and has affiliates in 18 countries, has become infamous for its slave markets



Sophie Grégoire Trudeau's International Women's Day message: think of the men

The wife of prime minister Justin Trudeau divided opinion on social media with a post inviting praise for men and boys who promote gender equality. Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, the wife of Canada's prime minister, has set off a social media firestorm by suggesting women celebrate International Women's Day by highlighting boys and men who promote gender equality. The post appeared on several social media sites on Tuesday. "This week, as we mark International Women's Day, let's celebrate the boys and men in our lives who encourage us to be who we truly are, who treat girls & women with respect, and who aren't afraid to speak up in front of others," Grégoire Trudeau wrote.

She urged women to snap a photo of themselves with a male ally and share it on

social media, adding: "Together, we can create a movement that inspires more men

to join the fight to build a better tomorrow with equal rights & opportunities for everyone ... because #EqualityMatters." The post was accompanied by a photo of Grégoire Trudeau holding hands and gazing into the eyes of her husband, Justin Trudeau, a self-described feminist.

Reaction was swift. While more than 13,000 people on Facebook said they liked or loved the post, thousands of others blasted Grégoire Trudeau for being tone deaf. "364 days a year I am all up to holding hands with my favourite men and creating partnerships and alliances that will support equality," read one of the top-ranked responses.

es. "But today I don't want to celebrate men. I want to remember all women who protested

thank the generations of women around the world who never forgot their inherent dignity and worth, helping me to preserve my own." Some juxtaposed Grégoire Trudeau's words with her husband's

reaching out and building bridges, finding genuine common ground and assuming good-will from



against not being able to vote, talked about unequal pay, stood up to the society, protecting our rights and freedoms." Other commenters described the post as "utterly ridiculous" and "shameful" while one asked: "I have to first be oppressed in patriarchy, but also spend more emotional labour comforting men who make any effort whatsoever?" Another added: "Yes, let's celebrate the men who, in a world that is still dominated by patriarchal culture, give us permission (because we need it?) to be ourselves, be safe, and be heard. No thanks. My parents raised me to know that all of that is a right, not a privilege granted by men. I will instead

actions. "If your husband were a true feminist and, by your own definition isn't 'afraid to speak up in front of others', he would denounce Trump personally and his administration's misogyny. Until he does, he's a lip-service feminist and I can't take him seriously as a fighter for the cause." While several world leaders have taken aim at the US president over his actions, Trudeau has avoided any public criticism of Trump. Others, however, backed Grégoire Trudeau's viewpoint. "Despite the backlash you're taking over this, I'd like to say thank you for the spirit of inclusion it was clearly meant in. We need more people

each other if we're to repair the fractures that have been spreading in our society," read one comment. Another added cheekily: "I'm single. Can I borrow Justin to take a picture with him?"

Hours later, Grégoire Trudeau weighed in with a second post. "Well, now we're having a conversation! Thanks to everyone for your feedback and pics! Love it," she wrote. "Our goal is gender equality, and fighting for it is going to require men and women working together - raising our boys and girls to make a difference, hand-in-hand. This is about recognizing that we should be allies on this journey," she added.

The Gaps in Lebanon's New Refugee Policy

A new residency policy announced last month waiving hefty residency fees for some Syrian refugees in Lebanon is a step forward for many people desperate for a secure legal status here. But it leaves many others out in the cold.

Lebanon tightened its residency policy two years ago, requiring Syrians to pay a hefty \$200 annual fee to maintain legal status in the country. Since then, more than 60 percent of refugees are estimated to have lost their legal status, restricting their ability to move freely for fear of arrest. This has made it much harder for them to work, get health care and education, and register births and marriages. The lack of legal status contributes to widespread poverty, a risk of statelessness for the refugees' newborn children, early marriage, and barriers that keep 250,000 Syrian children out of school. For many Syrians here, the new fee waiver will

be life changing. But it excludes a large part of the refugee population, raising troubling questions as to Lebanon's continued efforts to delegitimize Syrians' claims to refugee status. The order excludes an estimated 500,000 Syrians not registered with UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, even though the government directed UNHCR to stop registering Syrians as refugees in May 2015. It also excludes anyone who has used a Lebanese sponsor to maintain legal residency, even though General Security officers have required many Syrians to secure sponsors-in contravention of Lebanese policies.

Lebanese General Security offices also have a history of

applying new directives inconsistently. Human Rights Watch called several General Security offices and received contradictory information about how the directive would be carried out. One office still requires refugees to sign a pledge not to work, though that requirement was dropped last summer. Meanwhile, Lebanese security services have continued mass raids on refugee communities, arresting people those without legal residency.

Lebanese authorities have long

from Lebanon to Syria. Lebanon's president recently called for the return of refugees to "safe" zones inside Syria. And in February Lebanon's foreign minister called for adopting "a policy to encourage the Syrians to return to their country."

The situation inside Syria simply does not permit the creation of truly safe zones. As the UN high commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi, said last month, "Let's not waste time planning safe zones that

Convention, it is bound by the customary international law principle of nonrefoulement, and under human rights law, not to return anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture or other ill-treatment, or a threat to life. Refoulement occurs not only when a refugee is directly rejected or expelled, but also when indirect pressure is so intense that it leads refugees to believe that they have no practical option but to return to a country where they face these

risks. Under international refugee practice, repatriation is only considered voluntary if refugees have a genuinely free choice about whether to return and are fully informed about conditions in their home country.

Lebanese authorities should expand the new fee waiver to cover all Syrian refugees in Lebanon and ensure that they

are able to live in safety until conditions permit their safe and voluntary return to Syria. Lebanese officials should also reaffirm their commitment not to forcibly return anyone to Syria.

Lebanon has put richer and more powerful countries to shame by taking in as many as 1.5 million refugees-25 percent of its population-at a time when others have closed their doors. It deserves far greater international respect and support for that. But Syrians excluded from the new policy are still stuck in legal limbo, with disastrous consequences. Lebanon should extend legal status to all Syrian refugees in the country, and not exclude those who are among the most vulnerable.



pursued a policy of undermining Syrians' claims to refugee status and limiting the number of refugees registered with UNHCR. Lebanon refers to people who fled here from Syria after March 2011 as "temporarily displaced individuals" as opposed to "refugees." In January 2015 General Security began enforcing new border entry regulations that effectively sealed the border to many Syrians fleeing armed conflict and persecution.

The residency renewal announcement comes amid troubling public statements about the possible return of refugees, including reports of negotiations between Hezbollah and Syrian opposition forces to return refugees

will not be set up because they will not be safe enough for people to go back." Areas that appear safe today could come under attack tomorrow. And refugees I have spoken with in recent months certainly don't feel that conditions are safe enough for them to return.

International law on this is clear: any forced or coerced return of refugees from Lebanon would be unlawful, whether or not they are registered with UNHCR or have legal status in Lebanon. Yet this new policy risks cementing a second class of refugees living without residency, who could be among the first to go should coerced returns ever take place.

Although Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Refugee