



## Human Rights Now

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### 29<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council

#### Agenda item 3: SR on Violence against Women

#### **The International community must address discriminatory punishment and treatment of women and girls that remains prevalent globally.**

Thank you Mr./Ms. President,

Human Rights Now is gravely concerned by the discriminatory punishment and treatment against women in many states. Despite ratifying CEDAW, many member states have failed to implement the domestic reforms necessary to eliminate such discriminatory punishment and treatment. Those situations contribute impunity over sexual violence against women.

Applying *Sharia* law in adultery cases (known as *zina*) disproportionately affects women. In Maldives, although legally, both men and women can be prosecuted for *zina*, in practice women are disproportionately convicted. Key contributing factor to the disproportionate conviction of women is that a woman's pregnancy alone may constitute sufficient evidence to convict her of *zina*. Also, under *Sharia law*, the testimony of any female witness including the victim is given less weight than the testimony of any male witness.

In Afghanistan, rape is often prosecuted as the crime of *zina*, punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Women who are found to have participated in extramarital sexual relations can be found guilty of *zina* regardless of whether they consented to the sexual relation. That prevent access to justice for victims of sexual violence.

Pakistan has made efforts to update its laws in accordance with CEDAW. Under the Protection of Women Act of 2006, rape cases are now brought under the Penal Code instead of *Sharia* law. In 2011, the legislature criminalized certain traditional acts committed against women. These reforms are an important step; however, women still suffer other violations such as honour killings.

Human Rights Now urges all states to review and repeal all laws and practices discriminating against women. The international community should take concrete steps to ensure elimination of these practices. HRN asks both the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, to conduct an investigation and make effective recommendations. Additionally, we urge the Human Rights Council and General Assembly to pass resolutions to address this matter.

Thank you for your attention.