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UN Women: Prevention of Honor Killings

Background

Honor killings, or honor-based violence, is the violence committed against women and young girls in order to punish them for the perception of dishonor that they have brought onto their family or community. Usually the perpetrators are the victims' family members because they believe they have been disgraced or dishonored. Honor killings find their origin in ancient Roman times, when a senior male retained the right to kill an unmarried yet sexually active daughter, or an adulterous wife. Most honor killings are committed by both immediate and non-immediate family members, and in some third world countries, tribe leaders and tribal councils may be the perpetrators of this violence. Methods used for honor killings include female genital mutilation, acid attacks, forced marriages, and other forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, and psychological. Honor killings do not only occur in the Middle East, South Asia, or in Muslim-majority countries, but they have also spread to the US, the UK, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, Turkey, and Uganda. Approximately 5,000 women and girls are killed per year, with over 2,000 of these killings happening in either India or Pakistan. Over 11,000 cases of honor killings have been committed in the UK between 2010 and 2014, and many of these practices have spread to the US as well.

UN Involvement

The issue of honor killings stems from the worldwide issue of the rights of women and violence against women. The topic of women's rights was a major concern of the United Nations as soon as it was created in 1945. Within the first year of the UN's creation, the Economic and Social Council established the Commission on the Status of Women. Many other organizations and agencies were established by the General Assembly. The General Assembly has also addressed the Elimination on the Violence against Women in 1993 and established International Women's Day as November 25th. The Commission on the Status of Women was established by the Economic and Social Council. The commission soon created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ensuring gender neutral language. The international feminist movement became popular during the 1900s as the first World Conference on Women was held, the UN Decade for Women was declared, and CEDAW was established. In 1979, the General Assembly established the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and in 1995, The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing; these two actions were huge steps in the progress of women's rights. The UN Women or UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women consisted of four branches, including the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW). The United Nations had held four World Conferences on women, discussing the advancement of women and areas that are concerning. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action was one of the achievements of the Fourth World Conference on women. In addition, in 2010, The Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, was launched by UNIFEM in

hopes of using data to end violence against women and create effective solutions. Although many actions have been taken by the UN to support women's rights, the specific topic of honor killings has not been mainly emphasized by the UN. This is most likely due to the fact that the UN focuses on the overall umbrella topic of gender abuse, meaning that they are actively looking for solutions for all gender-based violence.

Committee Involvement

UN Women has been actively working to spread awareness for the prevention of honor killings by releasing reports from countries in which honor killings have happened. Recently, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka has acknowledged and congratulated the Government of Pakistan for passing anti-killing and anti-honour bills. Along with this, it condemned specific reports of honor killings in Afghanistan. UN Women works to educate the general public about the amount of honor killings through statistics and aforementioned reports. Many conferences have been held in order to advocate for and create solutions for honor killings and gender based violence. One of these conferences was the plenary session of Five Days of Violence Prevention Conference held on October 2, 2017 at Johannesburg, South Africa, where the Executive Director of UN Women gave another speech for the people attending the event. Overall, UN Women works towards spreading awareness and finding solutions for honor killings and gender based violence.

Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality

The fifth Sustainable Development Goal focuses on creating gender equality in third world countries and lessening the risks of gender based violence, which includes honor killings. In this committee, the focus will be on the prevention of honor killings, but with the intention of

being closer to meeting this goal. By preventing honor killings, UN Women also hopes to diminish unrealistic standards for women in the international community and allow them more autonomy in terms of political decisions, educational decisions, sexual decisions, etc.

Bloc Positions

Middle East/South Asia

Southeastern Asia and the Middle East are primarily the areas in which honor killings are present. The killings continue to occur in these areas due to a weak judicial system and informal legal settlements. The restrictions on marriage that involve distinctive castes and contracts between the male and female, is able to play an enormous role in honor killings in Southern Asia. Overall, although the government does not support honor killings, not much action has been taken by the countries to stop the issue.

Europe/North America

North America and Europe have some of the higher cases of honor killings, with majority of action occurring within migrant and immigrant populations and areas. It has been noticed that HBV has been linked and associated with honor killings with evidence from tribal survival values. However, there have been many actions taken by countries in this area to prevent violence against women, such as protection for victims and NGOs dedicated to the protection of women.

African Bloc

North Africa is one of the regions where honor killings are the most prominent. Reports show that honor killings are most common in Libya and Jordan. NGOs, such as the Sisterhood is Global Association, are trying to set themselves up in Africa in order to monitor the amount of killings and violence committed against women are happening in these countries.

Latin American Bloc

Latin America can be considered one of “the most dangerous places to be a woman” because many gender-based crimes are committed against women in that region.

Questions to Consider

1. What has your country done to take action regarding honor killings?
2. What does your country believe the main cause(s) of honor killings is/are?
3. How does your country combat the preservation of culture and religion along with recognizing the danger of gender based violence?
4. How can your country gather more information and statistics about the honor killings that are occurring

Works Cited

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