



Asian-American Network
Against Abuse of Human Rights

My name is Amna Buttar, and I am the president and co-founder of Asian-American Network Against Abuse of Human Rights (ANAA). ANAA was developed in 2002 as an advocacy group to increase awareness regarding the human rights abuses of women of Pakistan especially towards laws in Pakistan that are discriminatory to women and other human beings in Pakistan. ANAA is registered in the State of Missouri with 501-c3 status. ANAA's campaign represents the struggle against religious extremism and the repressive silence imposed by misogynistic values. Our mission is to increase awareness about laws such as the Zina Ordinance that punish rape victims instead of rapists, deny justice to victims of violence, and impose a regime of silence on the women of Pakistan. Other members of Board of Directors of ANAA are: Dr Syed Ehtesham, Dr Tanveer Imam, Dr Zaffar Iqbal, Dr Mohammad Raza Khan, Dr Naseem Shekhani, Mr Ijaz Syed, and Ms Rafia Zakaria.

For years, I have been approached by numerous women here in the USA who have faced similar situations of abuse and I have provided support to them in seeking divorce and majority have remarried. While providing this informal support to Pakistani women living in the USA, I have always felt root cause of problems is within Pakistan. Some of the problems women face are due to the culture and traditions, but some are also due to laws that make it harder for women to seek justice. This is why in 2002, along with few other physicians, I co-founded ANAA (www.4anaa.org). We wanted to have a network that would increase awareness of problems Pakistani women face and work towards social change and increase awareness of laws that make it difficult to seek justice. Ever since moving to the USA in 1987, I have gone back to Pakistan 16 times and sometimes twice in one year. Since forming ANAA in 2002, I have visited women prisons in Lahore and Karachi several times to interview women who are there and to learn first hand injustices faced by women of Pakistan. I have visited shelters in Karachi, Lahore, and Meerwala, and interviewed women. I have been to a brothel in the city of Khan Pur, and seen the misery women have to face due to sex slavery. We have developed close connections with several women's rights and human rights groups in Pakistan including Aurat Foundation, Human Rights Commission for Pakistan, War Against Rape, and many others. We have also developed networks with South Asian and Muslim Domestic Violence organizations in the USA including APNA GHAR in Chicago and SAKHI in New York city, as well as international human rights organizations like Amnesty International, Equality Now, Girls Learn International, Woman's Edge, and Vital Voices.

While continuing to increase awareness regarding violence against women, ANAA has also broadened the agenda to include all abuses of human rights. We are the first Pakistani-American organization in the USA that focuses on human rights abuses in Pakistan. Pakistani Diaspora, other American, Pakistanis in Pakistan and all over the

world have started to look up to ANAA and particularly me as a voice for victims and are hopeful that our intervention may bring social change in Pakistan. We have led rallies in New York, and Washington DC to protest the oppressive regime of General Musharraf, and arranged many symposia and seminars in US to increase awareness regarding Gender Apartheid, and Gendercide in Pakistan, as well as oppression of human rights for people of Pakistan.

General Pervez Musharraf (president of Pakistan) himself has made several threatening remarks about ANAA including statements that say “if you malign the name of Pakistan outside Pakistan, I will use all my power to come after you”. His regime has maintained an opinion that if we talk about issues regarding Pakistan, we are maligning the name of Pakistan. General Musharraf can be heard at the Washington Post website below where he talks about an “organization” and he is actually talking about us. In the same tape, he made his infamous remarks where he said that women in Pakistan get themselves raped to get rich or to get visas to go abroad.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/audio/2005/09/23/AU2005092301253.html>

In December 2005, I had to go to Pakistan on an urgent basis as my mother was ill. While I was at my mother’s house, I was visited by Brigadier Ijaz Shah who is the director General of Intelligence Bureau. He made several threats including a statement that eluded that “they” can get a person killed even in New York. This account of Mr Ijaz Shah’s threat has been reported by Mr Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times of April 4th 2006, and in the foreword by him in Mukhtar Mai’s book called “in the name of honor”. In January 2006, Mukhtar Mai and I were scheduled to speak at the UN in New York, and at the last minute, our event was cancelled, because Pakistani Prime Minister was also going to speak at the UN the same day. The Pakistani Mission thought it would be embarrassing for the government and intervened to have the event cancelled to prevent this from being heard in a public forum.

ANAA has been tracking Supreme Court of Pakistan’s decision regarding key issues pertaining to women, and missing persons, and under the leadership of Chief Justice Chaudhry Iftikhar, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has decided on landmark cases to promote human rights and Justice for all. This is why we were appalled to see the military regime show disrespect to the highest office in the apex court of Pakistan. ANAA issued press release condemning this behavior, and demanded that Pakistani Government free the courts, and assure justice for all in Pakistan. When a group of Pakistani-American Doctors came to Pakistan from the USA, I decided to join them and went to Islamabad. Other Doctors were Dr Mohammad Taqi, Dr Ashraf Toor, and Dr Omar Atiq. Dr Omar Atiq’s flight was delayed so he could not join us for the press conference, and the rally. Mr Hashim Raza, who is an advocate High Court in Peshawar, NWFP, Pakistan, joined us as our legal advisor. We arranged a meeting with the suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry at his house in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 2nd, 2007. At the meeting, Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry assured us that he is innocent and his hands are clean. Later on that day, we had arranged a press conference at the Holiday Inn, Islamabad. At the press conference, we expressed our frustration at the lack of rule of law

in Pakistan. Next day, we went to the rally as a group. When I was at the rally, the atmosphere was very charged. We joined a group of lawyers and chanted slogans to free the courts and restore democracy. Around 9 am, Justice Iftikhar arrived with his lawyers in a jeep and a van. There were many police men facing the gate forming a wall, and the crowd had to pass through the wall of police. As I got closer to police, all of a sudden, several hands grabbed me from all sides. These men started aggressively touching my private parts. The aggressive grabbing continued and I realized that I had to turn around and walk out of the Supreme Court Gate. As I turned around, these men came after me and continued to grab me and pulled me back. One of them pushed me down and I fell on my knees. He pushed my head down and put one hand on my back so I could not get up and with one hand he kept aggressively groping my private parts. This attack was very sexual in nature and terrifying for me. Most terrifying part of it all was that it was broad daylight, and I was in the middle of a crowd of thousands of people, and yet I was being attacked by these monsters who could have done any thing to me at that time. This feeling of terror, humiliation, and helplessness is unbelievable. Here I am, an inspiration to the rest of the world and a voice for the victims and survivors, and yet I was voiceless at that time. I did not give up, and continued to fight him; with my right hand, I kept pushing his filthy hand away from me and with my left arm and leg, I was trying to wiggle out. I was able to get up from under him, and then turned around to see who he was and, who were the accomplices. I saw a group of men wearing black T shirts that said Anti-terrorist Squad. I could recognize that guy who attacked me, and actually saw him hanging out inside the Supreme Court compound all day. I was shook up by the whole ordeal, and stumbled out of the gate. In the second vehicle carrying Justice Iftikhar's lawyers was Ms Wajiha Mehdi who witnessed this attack. She asked me if I was ok, and I told her quickly what had happened to me. I remained outside the gate all day and spoke to several media personnel regarding the event. Someone pointed a Superintendent Police and I went to him and told him what had happened, and he said he couldn't do any thing and I should go talk to the Magistrate, and he pointed in a direction. I went over to the Magistrate and told him what had happened, and he gave me his name and number and told me to call him later. His name is Dr Ehtesham, and I told him that I know that man is around and I could recognize him and we should do it then, however, he paid no attention to this matter. I found out that these men wearing these anti-terrorist squad t-shirts are called the "elite police". Later on, I found out that my left knee was bleeding and I had a wound on my left ankle. When I finally went home that evening, my arm was hurting and I realized that I had several bruises all over my arm. Later on, I found out that Brigadier Ijaz Shah called my other brother Pervaiz Buttar who is an attorney in Australia. He told my brother Pervaiz that I will suffer the consequences of being in Pakistan. My brother told him that I had a five years old daughter and begged him not to harm me. Pervaiz tried to call me immediately, but I was already in the rally and my mobile phone was turned off.

Above facts are enough to make me believe that the attack on me was planned to warn me and to silence me. I have dedicated my life to end this tyranny of silence and yet devious and brutal attempts are being made to silence me. My family is dedicated towards the cause of justice and yet I was attacked inside Supreme Court Compound where my brother was holding court. I have spent years trying to end violence against

women, and yet I was subjected to sexual violence by the police who were there to supposedly protect me. Through this ordeal, I have seen first hand the plight of women and men who are seeking justice in Pakistan.

I started in 2002 as an advocate for women's rights. I soon realized that human rights is the field I was working in and became much more of an activist. Today, as I continue on my long journey, I have been overwhelmed by the inequity and lack of opportunity for oppressed people everywhere. I want to be an instrument of change and will channel my energies towards achieving the aim of leveling the playing fields and improve the rules and regulations for the masses without a voice. My organization is pledged to making a difference and I will resolutely lead and direct our efforts to changing the law, the rules and regulations which oppress society. I cannot change the culture of my people which I respect and love very much- but I hope our efforts will give a voice and an instrument to the people so that at the very least the people will have an opportunity to speak in a structured environment within the rule of law.

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