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NCSW Urges Criminalizing Marital Rape After Karachi Tragedy

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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) demands amendments to criminalize marital rape following the tragic death of a 19-year-old Karachi woman, allegedly killed by her husband after sexual violence.

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has called for urgent legal reforms to criminalize marital rape in Pakistan, prompted by the brutal killing of a 19-year-old woman in Karachi on August 7, 2025. The NCSW condemned the incident, alleging the victim endured sexual violence at the hands of her husband, leading to her death, as

reported by Dawn. The commission urged amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) to remove exemptions shielding perpetrators of marital rape, emphasizing that such acts violate women's fundamental rights.

During a press conference in Islamabad, NCSW Chairperson Nilofar Bakhtiar highlighted the need for explicit legislation to address non-consensual acts within marriage, which are currently not recognized as rape under Section 375 of the PPC. This section exempts husbands from prosecution unless the wife is under 15, a loophole the NCSW seeks to close. Bakhtiar stated that the commission's stance aligns with international human rights standards, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Pakistan ratified in 1996. She referenced a 2024 United Nations report noting that 51 countries, including Poland since 1932, have criminalized marital rape, urging Pakistan to follow suit.

The Karachi incident has intensified calls for reform, with the NCSW citing data from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) indicating that 80% of married women reporting sexual violence in 2024 named their spouses as perpetrators. The commission stressed that legal protections under the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013 are insufficient, as they offer civil remedies rather than criminal penalties. Bakhtiar called for stricter enforcement and public awareness to combat societal norms that normalize such violence, according to The Express Tribune.

The NCSW plans to submit recommendations to the Ministry of Law and Justice by September 2025, advocating for amendments to align with constitutional guarantees under Article 25, which ensures equality. The commission also urged law enforcement to expedite investigations into the Karachi case, emphasizing accountability. This push reflects growing pressure to address gender-based violence, with the NCSW vowing to advocate for justice and legal reform to protect women's autonomy and safety.