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Couple Killed in Honour-Based Shooting

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A young couple in Balochistan, Pakistan, was brutally shot dead in a so-called honour killing for marrying against family wishes, sparking outrage and arrests. This article examines the tragedy and the urgent need for local reforms to curb such violence.

In a remote desert near Quetta, Balochistan's capital, Bano Bibi and Ehsan Ullah were executed by a group of armed men, allegedly on the orders of a tribal council led by elder Sardar Sherbaz Khan Satakzai. The horrific act, captured in a viral video, shows Bano, holding a Quran, defiantly saying, "Come, walk seven steps with me, then you can shoot me," before being gunned down. Ehsan was similarly killed, with gunmen firing at their bodies, as reported by Dawn. Balochistan Chief Minister (CM) Sarfaraz Bugti confirmed 14 arrests, including Satakzai and Bano's mother, Gul Jan Bibi, who defended the act as upholding "centuries-old Baloch traditions." The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

(HRCP) reported 405 honour killings in 2024, condemning the state's failure to dismantle tribal jirgas.

The incident exposes the grip of patriarchal tribal customs in Balochistan, where local governance often yields to extralegal councils. Harris Khalique, HRCP Secretary-General, told Al Jazeera that such killings reflect “medieval practices” perpetuated by feudal lords to maintain control. Activists like Sammi Deen Baloch, posting on X, called the act a “humiliation of humanity,” urging tribal elders to respect women's choices. The provincial government's swift arrests signal a push for justice, but critics argue that federal policies, often disconnected from rural realities, enable these parallel justice systems. Islamabad's inaction has long frustrated local efforts to enforce the 2016 law banning honour killings.

This tragedy demands stronger local action over centralized mandates. Balochistan's authorities must dismantle illegal jirgas and bolster law enforcement to protect individual rights. The courage of Bano and Ehsan underscores the need for cultural reform, ensuring no family's “honour” justifies murder. As public outrage grows, Sindh and other provinces should follow Balochistan's lead, prioritizing community-driven solutions to end this barbaric practice.