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Quetta ATC Prolongs Tribal Leader's Remand in Couple Murder Case

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The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Quetta extended the physical remand of tribal leader Sardar Sherbaz Satakzai, a key suspect in the brutal “honour” killing of Bano Bibi and Ehsan Ullah, for an additional 10 days. This article examines the ongoing investigation, the societal implications of tribal justice, and the need for stringent legal action to curb such atrocities, highlighting concerns about entrenched cultural practices that undermine Pakistan’s legal framework.

The double murder, which occurred three days before Eid ul Adha in Quetta's Degari area, shocked the nation after a viral video showed armed men executing the couple in broad daylight. The First Information Report (FIR), filed by Station House Officer (SHO) Naveed Akhtar at Hanna-Urak Police Station, charged suspects under Section 302 (murder) of the Pakistan Penal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, responding to public outrage, ordered swift arrests, with 20 suspects, including Satakzai, detained so far. "No one has the right to kill in such a disgusting way," Bugti stated on X, emphasizing that tribal jirgas ordering such acts must be stopped. The Serious Crimes Investigation Wing (SCIW) is leading the probe, with autopsies revealing Bano Bibi suffered seven gunshot wounds and Ehsan Ullah nine.

The case exposes the persistent grip of tribal customs in Balochistan, where jirgas often bypass constitutional law. A disturbing video statement from Bano's mother, Gul Jan, defended the killings as aligned with Baloch traditions, a stance condemned by the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) as contrary to Islamic teachings. This justification underscores a dangerous disconnect between tribal practices and modern legal standards. The Balochistan High Court (BHC) has taken notice, summoning officials to ensure accountability.

Pakistan cannot afford to let tribal edicts supersede justice. The ATC's decision to extend Satakzai's remand signals a commitment to thorough investigation, but stronger measures are needed to dismantle systems that perpetuate "honour" killings. With 346 such murders reported nationwide from January to November 2025, the government must prioritize legal reforms and public education to protect lives and uphold the rule of law.