

Honour Crimes between National, Regional and Informal Laws: The Case of Iraqi Kurdistan

Abstract Dr Nazand Begikhani
University of Bristol, United Kingdom

The paper discusses the legal treatment of honour-based violence (HBV) in Iraqi Kurdistan Region. It examines the judiciary context in Kurdistan Region, focussing on the criminal justice system and law implementation in relation to honour crimes.

The paper draws on a two-year research into honour-based violence in Iraqi Kurdistan Region led by the University of Bristol. The research involved 131 in-depth interviews with stakeholders addressing HBV in Kurdistan Region, including legal practitioners, MPs, persecutors, police officers, women's rights organisations and government officials.

Honour-based violence is a form of violence committed against women by family male members to restore family honour when it is perceived as tarnished. The practice is part of general violence against women occurred throughout the world with cultural and historical specificities. Our research found that, in recent years, honour-based violence has been practised on a large scale in Iraqi Kurdistan Region. In Response to that and based on the national Iraqi penal code, Kurdistan Region's authorities have initiated some major legal reforms, which have made the judiciary provision different from the rest of Iraq. Our research findings show that the legal reform has resulted in positive outcomes. However, the implementation of reformed laws has been challenged by socio-cultural boundaries and irresponsible institutional practices. In this context, legal practitioners, police as well as women's rights groups have sought an alternative legal remedy known as "Solhi Ashayri". "Solhi Ashayri" is a form of informal law supported by tribal mode of governance and intervention.

The paper will look at these different sets of legal remedies along with attempts as well as challenges to establish justice for women in a region torn by years of war, internal conflict and the rise of radical ideologies in the form of political Islam.