

Home may be a safe place- but not for everyone!

The second wave of COVID-19 is proving to be more dangerously fatal than the one a few months back. According to recent media reports, Pakistan records 2,829 new COVID-19 cases, 43 deaths and the situation is worsening with each passing day. 'Smart' lockdowns are being imposed in many locations across Pakistan. Educational institutions have been closed, restaurants are not allowed to offer dine-in facilities, many other economic activities are already badly impacted. Among all this bleak scenario, one aspect of this Pandemic is perhaps worth a lot of attention and that is an alarming rise in domestic violence and this is a global phenomenon but for Pakistan that already lies low in almost all development indicators, this is a glaring threat to the safety and wellbeing of our women. The myth that a woman is very safe within her four walls has been somewhat shattered as lockdowns for many women and girls is a punishment. They are forced to stay at home with abusive spouses, parents and family members with no and limited access to any support or relief services, if any. We need to take urgent measures not only to stop the spread of COVID-19, but to recognize and tackle gender-based violence (GBV). This second wave needs a lot of focus on research, field and desk -to unpack and bring out in the open the issues of domestic violence and the increase in the number of such cases. Women, as we know, are the worst sufferers in any humanitarian crisis, and need special attention and resources to ease out the multiple issues that they face. Covid-19 is no different, hence we all must play our role to identify, support and help women who are trapped in this horrifying situation. A lot of focus is required on their physical and mental health as being forced to live with a tormenting person is an experience that leaves huge scars on the mind and body of the victim/survivor.

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