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Xinhua

Afghan bride burns herself in protest of domestic violence

By Abdul Haleem, Chen Xin

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KABUL - "I have knocked any door to get rid of violence but all of my complaints have fallen to deaf ears. Instead, the prosecutor accused me of lying and warned me of dire consequence," a woman named Sadat revealed her ordeal in a weak voice while receiving treatment in Herat hospital.

The bandaged wrapped image of the young woman showed by the private Tolo television on Wednesday tells of the nightmare she had faced in her in-laws home.

Sadat, 15, is a native of Herat province 640 km west of Afghan capital Kabul. She married a man five months ago, hoping to start a happy new life.

"I got married to a man in Sawa village of Anjil district five months ago. My husband and my father-in-law had beaten me without any reason several times. The repeated mistreatment had forced me to complain, but all in vain as the prosecutor in Herat city overlooked my petition and warned me to either withdraw the complaint or face imprisonment," the badly injured bride told Xinhua from her bed in hospital.

"The last time I sought justice on Monday, the prosecutor again warned me of dire consequence if I refuse to withdraw my complaints.

"Such behavior left me with no choice but self-immolation because it was the only way to get rid of violence and insult," the severely burned lady murmured in her bed.

The doctor treating her in Herat hospital was skeptical of her recovery.

"She is in critical condition as 80 percent of her skin is burned. she has only 20 percent chance to survive," a doctor in the hospital told Xinhua.

This is not the first case of violence against women in post- Taliban Afghanistan.

For instance, Sahar Gul, a 15-years old girl from northern Baghlan province, was found by police last December to have been locked in an underground cell for six months by her in-laws.

Women's life has been tremendously changed in post-Taliban Afghanistan compared with a decade ago when Taliban regime ruled the country, but Afghan women are still suffering.

Taliban regime had confined women to their houses and outlawed schooling for girls. But in today's Afghanistan women are active in political, economic and social activities.

There are three women in Afghan cabinet and several women in parliament. Meanwhile, 30 percent of more than 8 million school children are girls.

Nevertheless, in the war-torn and conservative Afghanistan some traditional practices that violate women's rights are still widespread. Child marriage, forced marriage and exchange marriages are singled out by right activists as the most common violations.

"We presented our petition and complaints three months ago to get justice but have been overlooked, because the father-in-law of my daughter is an influential gun lord," the dejected mother standing alongside the bed of her burned daughter told Xinhua.

"This is my earnest demand not to trample the right of a woman and bring to justice those behind the crime as soon as possible," the mother of the young victim said.