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Lahore

Women's rights activist murdered

Saturday 20 August 2005, by [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 13 April 2005).

Yasmeen Kanwal, a leading activist with the women's rights organisation Women Workers Help Line (WWHL), was killed on April 4 in Shahdra, a suburb of Lahore. A medical investigation is being carried out to confirm reports she was raped before being murdered. The 24-year old was six months pregnant with her third child at the time.

The police have arrested one person, out of a believed four perpetrators. It is alleged that Yasmeen was stabbed by her neighbour and three of his relatives, because of her "boldness" in requesting her neighbour not to visit her roof top because her bathroom did not have a roof.

Yasmeen had a low-paid job as a health worker, and had been active in the WWHL for the last three years. Her mother, Jamila Begum, has been elected as a union council member and has been the main leader of the WWHL in Shahdra district.

Yasmeen was a fine working-class activist who led scores of demonstrations for the rights of women. The latest protest she helped the WWHL organise, against honour killings, was held on March 8, International Women's Day, in Lahore.

Yasmeen was one of the 14 study circle leaders of an adult literacy project and she got five days' training only a month before her death, when three Swedish teacher union trainers were in Pakistan. The adult literacy project is run by the Labour Education Foundation (LEF), sponsored by the Gothenburg Teachers Union.

Scores of WWHL activists demonstrated on April 5 at the Shahdra police station, protesting the police's lenient approach to arresting the murderer. The WWHL and the LEF are now providing legal help to the family.

Yasmeen's death is a great loss not only for WWHL but also to the whole movement. She was killed for standing up to the gangsterism of the male-dominated society in Pakistan. She dared to speak and asked the murderer to behave and not to come to her roof top.

I offer all sympathies to the family and offer a commitment to continue the struggle Yasmeen started.

P.S.

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Farooq Tariq is the general-secretary of the Labour Party Pakistan.