



## FATA WOMAN VOICELESS/INVISIBLE ENTITY: VICTIM OF CULTURAL STRUCTURE AND STATE SYSTEM

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### Abstract

One hundred and fifty million women of Pakistan living in the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) remain voiceless and invisible. In reality, the number of these women is much higher due to two major factors: one, statistical data collection about women is generally assumed to be unreliable in patriarchal societies, and two, due to the on-going military operations, in-land and cross-border migration has taken a toll of the male population, leaving behind female-headed families. Pakhtun women are simultaneously victimized by two male oppressive forces: the traditional Pakhtun tribal culture, which through its all-male *Jirga* system treats all females at a sub-human level, and the state administrative system operative through the FCR, Provincial or National Assembly and the Women Commissions, in which the FATA woman has no or little representation and mechanism to address her issues and problems. Ironically, FATA women are not only ignored by the above two bodies but also by other humanitarian and advocacy groups, such as the feminists' network, international amnesty and human rights commissions due to fear of state and non-state actors. In this paper, an effort is made to highlight the plight of tribal women, an issue which is missing in most conflict-related narratives and discourses. The paper will identify structured and semi-structured violence against women of FATA, exploring the traditional culture and the legal system which are responsible for providing space to those violating her rights and legalizing violence against her. The paper draws upon the lived experience of the author, native to the soil and the first-person narratives of women of the area.

### Keywords

FATA, Pakhtun women, Tribal women, cultural structures, State system, violence against women, *Pakhtunwali*