Father Slays New York Girl, 14, in TikTok ‘Honor Killing’

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/world/asia/pakistan-new-york-honor-killing.html>

Hira Anwar, 14, lived in two contrasting worlds in New York, where she was born and raised. Outside her home, she was a typical American teenager, laughing with friends, posting videos on TikTok and dreaming of a boundless future.

Inside the home, her reality was very different. Her parents, Pakistani immigrants who had settled in the United States over two decades ago, expected her to adhere to their cultural and religious values, which demanded modesty from women. To them, Hira’s bold, expressive online presence was a direct challenge.

That tension, familiar in South Asian immigrant households across the West, ended in deadly violence this week. Hira was fatally shot by her father and an uncle on Monday night, several days after arriving in Pakistan on what she had been told was a family vacation, the police said. The authorities called her death an “honor killing.”

In a chilling confession in Quetta, the capital of the southwestern province of Balochistan, Hira’s father, Anwar ul-Haq, said she had brought shame to the family by posting what he called inappropriate videos online, the police said.

Hira’s death is part of a deeply ingrained pattern of violence against women in Pakistan and within its diaspora, rights advocates said, an ancient problem that has taken on dangerous new dimensions with the rise of social media.

The [Human Rights Commission of Pakistan](https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/), an independent rights group, recorded 588 so-called honor killings in Pakistan in 2024, up from 490 in 2023 and nearly matching the 590 reported in 2022.

Women often become targets by refusing forced marriages, seeking divorce or separation, being in relationships deemed inappropriate by families, or engaging in other actions seen as violating conservative values. In one case last year, a girl was killed by her brother for using a cellphone. In another, a young woman was fatally poisoned by her parents for dating.

In several cases, families of Pakistani origin in Western countries have lured their daughters back to Pakistan under false pretenses. There, they have restricted their freedom, forced them into marriages with cousins — often to secure visas for the men — or, in some cases, killed them.

In 2022, two Pakistani sisters holding Spanish residency permits were [tortured and killed](https://www.catalannews.com/society-science/item/what-we-know-of-the-pakistani-sisters-murdered-in-honor-killing) a day after arriving in Punjab Province, the police in Pakistan said. Their husbands, an uncle and a brother carried out the killing after the sisters sought divorces from forced marriages, according to investigators.

Other killings have taken place in the West, and perpetrators in some cases have fled to Pakistan to avoid arrest.

In May, the authorities in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, working with Italian officials, arrested a woman who had been convicted, along with her husband, of [murdering their teenage daughter](https://www.ansa.it/english/news/general_news/2023/12/19/samans-parents-get-life-for-teens-honour-killing_1d81f140-6208-485f-bc10-32b657fa7c33.html). The killing, which took place in northern Italy, was over the daughter’s refusal of a forced marriage in Pakistan, the authorities said.

Experts studying the South Asian diaspora in Western countries say that intergenerational tensions are widespread, as younger overseas-born generations increasingly challenge traditional values.

Kavita Mehra, executive director of [Sakhi for South Asian Survivors](https://sakhi.org/), a New York-based nonprofit organization, said that in the United States, gender-based violence happened at higher rates within South Asian communities. Nearly half of South Asians in the United States report experiencing such violence at least once, according to surveys.

“This is not because our community is inherently more violent,” Ms. Mehra said, “but rather because we are enmeshed in intergenerational trauma — cycles of pain, silence and patriarchal control, shaped by histories of colonialism, displacement and migration.”

In the case of the killing this week of 14-year-old Hira, her father initially told the police that unidentified gunmen had opened fire on him and his daughter while they were traveling to her uncle’s house, according to Babar Baloch, a police officer in Quetta.

But after gathering evidence and recording witness statements, the police became suspicious and detained the father, who worked as an Uber driver in New York and has two other daughters. The father, Mr. ul-Haq, and his brother-in-law were arrested on Wednesday on suspicion of murder.

In his confession, the police said, Mr. ul-Haq expressed objections to his daughter’s clothing, lifestyle and social relationships.

Pakistan has introduced laws over the years, some carrying the [death penalty](https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/26/international/asia/pakistan-passes-bill-approving-death-for-honor-killings.html), to curb so-called honor killings.

In 2016, after public outrage over the [murder of the social media star Qandeel Baloch](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/17/world/asia/qandeel-baloch-pakistan-internet-celebrity-killed.html?searchResultPosition=10) by her brother, Parliament [passed a law closing a legal loophole](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/07/world/asia/pakistan-toughens-laws-on-rape-and-honor-killings-of-women.html) that let families forgive perpetrators.

Still, gender-based violence persists because of societal acceptance and systemic bias in law enforcement and the judiciary in Pakistan, experts said.

“Honor crimes and femicide should be treated as crimes against the state,” said Shazia Nizamani, a Karachi-based legal expert. “Even if a family chooses not to pursue legal action, the state has a responsibility to ensure justice is delivered.”