



SOUTH ASIA

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Poll says Afghanistan 'most dangerous' for women

Afghanistan is the most dangerous country for women, an international poll of experts on gender issues says.

High levels of violence, poor healthcare and poverty make Afghanistan the worst place for women, the study by the Thomson-Reuters Foundation says.

The survey places the Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan in second and third positions.

India is rated the fourth most dangerous country due to high levels of female foeticide and sex trafficking.

Somalia ranked fifth in the survey.

'Hidden dangers'

"Ongoing conflict, Nato airstrikes and cultural practices combined make Afghanistan a very dangerous place for women," said Antonella Notari, head of Women Change Makers, a group that supports women social entrepreneurs around the world.

"In addition, women who do attempt to speak out or take on public roles that challenge ingrained gender stereotypes of what is acceptable for women to do or not, such as working as policewomen or news broadcasters, are often intimidated or killed," she added.

The poll asked 213 experts from five continents to rank countries on issues like overall perception of danger, access to healthcare, violence, cultural discrimination and human

trafficking.

"This survey shows that 'hidden dangers' like a lack of education or terrible access to healthcare are as deadly, if not more so, than physical dangers like rape and murder which usually grab the headlines," Monique Villa, chief executive of Thomson-Reuters Foundation, said.

Pakistan was included in the list for having "some of the highest rates of dowry murder, so-called honour killings and early marriages".

India ranked fourth primarily due to female foeticide, infanticide and human trafficking, the report said.

A BBC correspondent in Delhi says India's inclusion among the worst five countries in the world is bound to raise eyebrows here.

The report quotes some experts as saying that "the world's largest democracy was relatively forthcoming about describing its problems, possibly casting it in a darker light than if other countries were equally transparent about trafficking".

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