

HR activist Shahla Zia passes away

By Our Reporter

ISLAMABAD, March 10: Shahla Zia, one of the pioneers of the women rights movement in Pakistan, died here on Thursday morning after a brief illness. She was 58 and leaves behind two daughters and a son.

She was buried at the Islamabad Graveyard in the evening. Her funeral was attended by family members and a large number of people from different walks of life, including lawyers, parliamentarians, representatives of civil society and government officials. The late Ms Zia was the daughter of eminent educationist Dr Satnam Mahmood and prominent freedom fighter Nawabzada Mahmood Ali Khan.

One of the founding members of Women Action Forum Aurat Foundation and the AGHS women's law firm and legal aid centre, Ms Zia was one of those women activists who were jailed for protesting against the Law of Evidence at the Lahore High Court in 1983. She was at the forefront of the struggle against all discriminatory laws against women and religious minorities.

Ms Zia made immense contribution to law reform and research on women's legal, political and development issues. She was one the main authors of the 1997 report of the Commission of Inquiry on Women and an author and co-editor of the 'National Report-1995' for the Women's Conference in Beijing.

She conceptualized the chapter on women's development for the 9th five-year plan for the Planning Commission. She had resign from the various government committees and the Beijing Core Group when the 15th Constitutional Amendment was introduced in Parliament in 1998. In the death of Shahla Zia the women and human rights movements have lost a sincere and courageous activists.

[Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2005/03/11/nat17.htm>]

Human rights activist Shehla Zia dies

Staff Report

LAHORE: Shehla Zia, a prominent human rights activist and the joint executive director of the Aurat Foundation, died on Thursday morning in Islamabad after protracted illness at the age of 58.

She is survived by two daughters, Ayesha Baidar and Maleeha Zia, and a son, Aimal Zia.

Her funeral was held in Islamabad and was attended by hundreds of human rights activists, lawyers, parliamentarians and members of civil society organisations.

Shehla Zia offered a number of services to the cause of human rights particularly of women rights. She authored many books on women's legal rights and contributed to the preparation of a report for an enquiry commission headed by Justice (r) Aslam Nasir Zahid, that drew attention to women's legal and human rights.

The report is recognised as the best reference book about the status of women and their rights. Shehla Zia was the founding partner of the AGHS women's law firm and legal aid centre in 1980. She was a pioneering activist of the Women's Action Forum and was one of those jailed for protesting against the law of evidence in the Lahore High Court in 1983.

She was at the forefront of the struggle against all discriminatory laws against women and non-Muslim Pakistanis. Her immense contribution to law reform and research on women's legal, political and development issues will form a shining chapter in the history of the women's movement in Pakistan. All Aurat Foundation offices throughout the country will remain close today (Friday) to pay tribute to Shehla Zia's services.

[Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_11-3-2005_pg7_30]

Death of Shahla Zia condoled

By Our Reporter

ISLAMABAD, March 11: Chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Benazir Bhutto has condoled the death of Shahla Zia, one of the pioneers of the women rights movement in Pakistan.

Ms Shahla Zia passed away in Islamabad on Thursday morning after a brief illness. In a message on Friday, Benazir said Shahla Zia was in the forefront of fight for the rights of women and for the repeal of oppressive anti-women laws.

Despite threats by extremist elements for her outspoken and courageous support for the cause of women, she remained undeterred and pursued her mission with a rare singularity of purpose, she said.

Late Shahla belonged to a distinguished family of freedom fighters and she would be remembered in her own right for the rich legacy she left behind. She had the courage of her convictions to resign from the government's various committees and the Beijing Core Group when the 15th Constitutional Amendment was introduced in parliament in 1998. Shahla will always be remembered for her immense courage, the PPP chairperson said.

[Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2005/03/12/nat12.htm>]

Mind behind movement

By Ayesha Khan

We were so fortunate to have counted Shahla Zia among us. Much work remains, and it will be very hard indeed to proceed without her in our midst.

The most outstanding citizens of this country tend to pass away quietly, without many of us even aware of who they are. Just as often, we lavish mediocrity with praise and privilege, giving the living a false sense of greatness in their own lifetime. This is why Shahla Zia has passed away in our midst and the country can go on as if nothing major had happened. But for the women's movement, precisely the opposite is true.



Shahla Zia was a founding member of the Women's Action Forum, and a joint director of the Aurat Foundation in Islamabad for over a decade. She trained as a lawyer in Lahore, and in the early years of her career helped to establish AGHS -- Asma, Gulrukh, Hina, Shahla -- the legal aid organisation for women. She sat on the National Inquiry Commission on the Status of Women, led by Mr. Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid, and was a major contributor to its 1997 report, which led to the establishment of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Her advocacy work focused on the increased political participation of women. She lobbied with lawmakers patiently and persistently to restore reserved seats for women in our elected bodies, and later led efforts to train new women entrants into local bodies to be effective leaders.

The deeper truth is that Shahla was our mentor in the women's movement in Pakistan. She achieved that stature not through her public activities, but through the manner in which she guided others to work together in a group for social change and in the unique clarity of her thought. She was clear and firm on the principles of the Women's Action Forum as it struggled to counter discriminatory legislation, attacks from the religious right, and derision from an uncommitted public. She gave endless hours in meetings and discussions groups to explain to us, and remind us in times of confusion, what it was we were fighting to achieve for this country.

I recall the lengthy internal debate within WAF regarding the wording of the WAF Charter and our position on the issue of secularism in the early 1990s. Members were stuck; if we demanded a state that was secular did that compromise our belief in Islam? Was it possible to reconcile faith and politics without compromising the former and diminishing women's rightful share in power? Even harder, was it possible to have a charter that accommodated the belief systems of all women, believers and non-believers, and detracted nothing from their rights as citizens?

I still have a memo she wrote after a WAF meeting on this issue, articulating the fine points of why it was correct for WAF to take such a controversial stand. She wrote that taking a stand in favour of a secular state "does not mean that WAF is in any way against Islam, but merely that WAF believes that religion is a personal matter and not for the State to dictate or control." If religion becomes the province of the State, she added, "It has always been exploited by the State for its own political gains and motives, and this has invariably adversely affected women, minorities and the poor." In a country where the Hudood Ordinances (1979) are still in force despite frequent recommendations for their repeal, it is instructive to remember the benefit of a clear secular approach even a decade after Shahla made these notes.

She placed her faith in the Constitution and in a legal system that could be turned into a support for the poor and marginalised in society if we fought for it. The first chapter of the 1997 Report of the Inquiry Commission puts the case simply. "The Constitution is a country's basic law. To the extent constitutional rule is promoted and becomes entrenched in a society to that extent democratic culture flourishes. And it is in a democratic culture that women's rights have the best chance of recognition."

Can these arguments be dismissed as rhetoric of the westernised elite of Pakistan, the coffee-drinking, cigarette-smoking, English-speaking women activists accused by their detractors of misrepresenting women of this country? For that is what opponents of the NGO movement have claimed time and again in response to activists' demands for women's rights and social justice.

Nothing is quite what it seems when viewed from such a distance. Shahla was calm, compassionate, and soft-spoken. She was devoted to her large family, devoid of material greed, and shy of social or media attention. She genuinely loved the law, and had the patience to study its nuances and articulate subtleties that was beyond many an enthusiastic activist. And in an increasingly hypocritical society, Shahla's stature grew because her honesty remained undiminished, and her integrity as a friend and colleague was never in dispute.

We were so fortunate, and indeed honoured, to have counted Shahla Zia among us in Pakistan. We are a better people for it, since she taught us through her intellect and example. Much work remains, and it will be very hard indeed to proceed without her in our midst. Yet her tremendous composure under pressure, her warmth, optimism and patience, remain the best example for those who need to continue this struggle for generations to come.

[Source: <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/mar2005-weekly/nos-20-03-2005/dia.htm#2>]

Tribute paid to activist of women's rights

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI, 21: Speakers at a meeting on Monday said that the best way to pay tributes to the services of the late Shahla Zia, a leading women rights activist, was to carry forward her mission.

The cause of protecting women's right had always remained near to her heart, they noted.

The meeting was organized by an NGO working for women's rights, the Aurat Foundation. A 10-minute film highlighting the role of Shahla Zia, who died a few days back, in the struggle for women's rights, was also screened.

Justice (r) Sabiuddin Ahmad, Justice (r) Nasir Aslam Zahid, Anis Haroon, Kunwar Khalid Yunus, Iqbal Haider, Zubaida Mustafa, Arif Hassan, Kaiser Bengali, Dr Shershah Syed, Sheen Farrukh and Nuzhat Kidwai were among those who spoke on the occasion.

Ms Zia was not at all a 'drawing room activist', but her crusade was stretched over a quarter of a century during which she always remained in the forefront, taking part in every event organized in protest against the laws discriminatory against women.

Her active role in the struggle had led to her detention repeatedly. She had also been subjected to brutal treatment by the law-enforcement agencies many a times, according to the speakers.

They pointed out that Shahla Zia had carried out an enormous amount of research on women's rights. Her work would continue to provide guidance to fellow activists in their course of the struggle, they added.

They said that the late activist had lobbied with parliamentarians and provided them with critical analyses of various discriminatory laws enacted and implemented during Gen Zia's era only to affect the weaker sections of society, mainly women.

Highlighting her commitment with the cause, they acknowledged her sincerity and honesty, recalling that she would quit many committees set up by government whenever she felt that the government's views and moves were in conflict with the interest of women or other aggrieved people.

The speakers made mention of the late activist's remarkable contribution towards the preparation of the reports produced and put forward by government bodies and NGOs on women's issues.

In this context, they particularly referred to Ms Zia's significant contribution to the report on the status of women which was prepared by Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid.

The report had stressed on a review of various laws found discriminatory towards women and other weaker sections of the society. Apart from women's issues, she had also moved the Supreme Court against Wapda's plan to install a grid station within a residential area.

The apex court had restrained Wapda from pursuing the plan and the verdict had repeatedly been quoted in various courts of other countries. The speakers said that Ms Zia, along with a few other women colleagues, had established, probably the first of its kind, an all-women law firm in Lahore.

She appeared always ready to move against gender bias, they said. Ms Zia has written various books and reports, besides extending her assistance in preparing drafts of amendments to certain discriminatory laws.

[Source: <http://www.dawn.com/2005/03/22/local11.htm>]

Shahla Zia remembered

By Farhat Anis

KARACHI: The pin drop silence and soggy eyes of people while looking at glimpses of Late Shahla Zia proved how precious she was to her friends and colleagues. A large number of activists, social workers, reformers, lawyers, educationists, politicians, parliamentarians and journalists gathered at the jam-packed hall of Sidco Center, Karachi to pay a tribute to the great human right's activist and the joint executive director of the Aurat Foundation. She had a brief battle with renal cancer for a short period and died in Islamabad at the age of 58 on March 10.

'A Celebration of Shahla Zia's Life and Spirit' was organised by the Aurat Foundation and Anis Haroon, Resident Director, Karachi said that "we believe in celebrating the contributions of great people like Shahla instead of mourning. Shelly (as she was called by friends and family) was a fighter and an excellent human being which brought excellence to her work."

"Her background of having a political activist father and an educationist mother (Satnam Mehmood) led her to fight for deprived humanity. Moreover, her greatest contribution is her research and legislative writing, which helped people fighting for the cause of legal rights of women," added Anis.

Being a lawyer, Shahla's contribution is in the form of books, reports and documents that is an asset for the organisations working for the cause of human rights and legislation of various laws having lacunae.

"Shahla was the brain behind the idea of having a National Commission on the Status of Women," said Justice (r) Aslam Nasir Zahid. He praised her contributions to the preparation of a report for an enquiry commission headed by Justice (r) Aslam Nasir Zahid, that drew attention to women's legal and human rights. The report is recognised as the best reference book about the status of women and their rights.

Arif Hasan highlighted the optimism that Shahla carried in her person by saying that "I never saw her complaining and crying over problems. Infact, she always used to admire the change that we have in our society and urged to strengthen it more to derive a positive result. She was a role model and there is a dire need of promoting role models in our country."

"Shelly institutionalised her struggle instead of personalising it, however, she could have achieved a lot as a lawyer and specially the kind of brain and intelligence that was God gifted to her," said Iqbal Haider, former Senator and law minister while reminiscing Shahla's contributions.

Dr Sher Shah recalled her case on environment, which became a role model for many environmentalists. Shahla fought a case against the installation of a high-powered grid station in Islamabad and filed a suit against the concerned party and won the case through Supreme Court. There was a consensus amongst all those present on the occasion that Shelly has died but her spirit would live and the struggle that she started would continue.

Others who spoke on the occasion were Kunwar Khalid Yunus, Sheen Farrukh, Justice Sabihuddin, Kaiser Bengali, Mehnaz Rehman, Nuzhat Kidvai and Zubaida Mustafa.

[Source: <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/mar2005-daily/22-03-2005/metro/k4.htm>]

Aurat Foundation memorial for Shahla Zia: Human Rights activists recount their experiences with Shelly

By Waqar Gillani

LAHORE: Aurat Foundation (AF) held a ceremony on Monday to remember the late Shahla Zia, the untiring human rights lawyer who worked for the rights of women but is known for her 1994 Supreme Court victory that banned high tension electricity wiring from passing through residential areas.

Prominent activists expressed their sentiments about Shahla's death and recounted their memories of Shelly, as she was known by friends and family. The commemoration titled 'A celebration of Shahla Zia: life and spirit' was arranged at Ambassador Hotel on Monday.

Shahla was a joint executive director at AF. Following an illness, she passed away in Islamabad on March 10 at the age of 58.

The gloom was strongly felt as pictures of her flicked past on a projector screen while speakers addressed the gathering. "Shahla lives. We can see it in all those whose life touched hers, only to be enriched by the experience. We can see it in all those she loved and who will continue to cherish their unique relationships with her. It has been a privilege to know her," Samina Rehman read out from Nigar Ahmed's eulogy.

"Shelly refused to take an award for her contribution in the fight for human rights and instead asked the award to be given to AF," said Nigar Ahmed.

"Shelly's death is a big loss for me as a friend," said Hina Jillani. "She was one of the most trustworthy people I have had the honour of knowing. She fulfilled every expectation one could expect in a relationship of trust."

Jillani said that Shahla contributed an intellectual input to the struggle for an equal civil society. "Shelly was a great lawyer," she said. Farida Hasan, the headmistress of junior school in Aitchison College Lahore, had tears in her eyes and could not say beyond, "I don't know what to say."

Asma Jahangir said, "Shelly sacrificed a large part of her professional life for her family, knowingly and willingly. She was an extraordinary lawyer and human being and a loving character."

A pamphlet printed to commemorate Shahla as 'Smiling Honest Aspiring Humane Loyal Alive (SHAHLA)' included messages by several activists.

"She gave herself unsparingly to people who needed her. She was available and was always dependable. Her ready wit, generosity and comradeship lifted everyone's spirit and created hope. She was always up for a good fight if the cause was right and her

opinions were honest and principled. Losing Shelly is a loss more than one can bear," said Samina Rehman's message.

Farida Shaheed in her message said, "Shelly inspired people and taught them without resenting herself as a teacher, and without ever belittling the people she worked with. She was a fighter, one who left no scars, and this is an even bigger achievement. In our sorrow we also need to celebrate Shelly's life and spirit and continue her struggle in the way she would have wanted us to do."

The memorial was also addressed by Kauser Sheikh, Tahira Mazhar Ali Khan, IA Rehman and Naeem Shakir. Among those of her friends who attended were Khawar Mumtaz, Fareeda Shaheed, Neelam Hussain and Najam Sethi.

[Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_22-3-2005_pg7_25]

Selfless fighter

By Asma Jahangir

Shahla Zia, more affectionately known as Shelly, was a farsighted human rights defender as well as a fine human being. She had a sharp wit and a compassion that drew people towards her. The last time I met my friend Shelly, somehow I knew I would not see her again. She sat up in bed with difficulty trying to smile. Her voice had gone, yet she managed to greet me and also commented on my hairstyle. That was Shelly. She was always attentive to her friends, but avoided any attention to herself. She remained a selfless fighter for the rights of women.

Throughout my close association with Shelly I never heard her complain or be depressed. Her life was not a bed of roses -- far from it -- but she seemed content. Perhaps she had a faith deeper than those who wear their beliefs on their sleeves. Shahla was god fearing but had little faith in the rituals of religions. On the day she was to be operated she jokingly asked her "believer" friends to pray for her, and the others to hope for her recovery. She was diagnosed with cancer in December 2004, and passed away a few months later, on March 10 this year.

Shelly's parents were exceptional too. Her father was a leftist civil servant who died early. Her mother was the extraordinary Satnam Mahmood, who was born a Sikh and lived all her life in Pakistan. Satnam, better known as Nama, was an outspoken woman and feared no one. Shelly was as dignified as her mother, but more diplomatic, yet firm in her views. In a pleasing way she could stand her ground, with immense courage.

Shahla was one of Pakistan's first practicing women lawyers. She initially worked in the chambers of barrister M. Anwar and then with Dr. Pervaiz Hasan. After the birth of her second child she took a break from professional life. It was during this gap in her practice that I met her; together we were to start a life of activism. Barrister Shahid Rehman encouraged me to team up with her to explore the possibility of starting a law firm. It only took a few moments to convince Shelly.

Four partners, Shahla Zia, Hina Jilani, Gulrukh Rehman and myself set up AGHS Law Associates in Lahore. An all women's law firm was a bit of an amusement for our male colleagues. Some even suggested that we change the name by placing "h" before the "a" and more appropriately call it "hags". Others predicted its early demise or disputes within the partners. Nothing of the sort happened. The firm thrived and the partners bonded over the years. Shahla shifted to Karachi and eventually to Islamabad but her association with AGHS remains even to this day.

In the initial years Shelly was the senior partner and painstakingly taught us all the legal work. I benefited from her immense talent and was influenced by her simplicity. Shelly was also charming and clear-sighted. Had she continued in her law practice she

could have been one of the country's most competent lawyers. Her only fault was a complete lack of ambition.

According to her values, too much money was vulgar and display of it unthinkable. She laid great stress on sound education but was sceptical of the elitist form of education. There are, unfortunately, few women who can talk to men on equal terms. Shelly was one of them. Always polite but firm in her views, she could not be daunted by anyone..

The twelfth of February was an important date for all of us in AGHS. It was Shelly's birthday and the day the firm was born. Even more importantly the women's rally denouncing Zia's Islamisation started from AGHS on February 12, 1983. Shelly spent her birthday in the civil lines police station after being heavily baton charged by the police.

When the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan was inaugurated in 1986, Shelly delivered the paper on "religious minorities". It was a sensitive matter but she spoke eloquently about the persecution of religious minorities including Ahmedis. A couple of participants tried to disrupt her speech but she was not intimidated. Beneath that very soft veneer she had a lot of courage. That is because she was a woman of conviction and she could never hurt anyone or witness injustice in silence.

Shelly worked for the Aurat Foundation for many years. The Legislative Reform project had become an obsession for her. She had nothing to gain from it personally, but passionately believed that electing more women to the parliament would empower women generally. At one point, the PPP government was keen to elevate women to the bench. Shelly's name also came up. I tried to convince her to consider it but she firmly turned it down. Shy of any attention, she hated to be in the limelight except when relaxing amongst friends.

Shahla Zia's contribution to the cause of women has been significant. She was one of the first women to study the family laws and identify the inequalities and discriminations. She was the driving force in getting Nasir Aslam Zahid's Women's Commission Report of 1997 completed in time. I would sometimes get irritated at her speed and her high expectation of the report. It was as though our friend was in a hurry to see some advances. Woefully all she witnessed was a sham law on "honour" killings. The loss of Shelly Zia has left a void in the lives of her friends, and in the momentum of the movement for the rights of women.

[Source: <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/mar2005-daily/23-03-2005/oped/o4.htm>]

Shahla: a symbol of struggle, courage

Reference pays glowing tributes to the departed crusader

By Rasheed Khalid

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a National Reference on Shahla Zia, one of the pioneer activists of Women's Action Forum and co-founder of Aurat Foundation, paid glowing tributes to the departed lady, which became a symbol of continuous struggle, courage and commitment.

Aurat Foundation, WAF and other civil society organisations, friends and admirers of Shahla organised the reference and described this an event of celebration because hers was a life spent in pursuit of happiness for others.

The love, affection and dedication associated with Shahla was exemplified by the packed spacious auditorium at ILO building here on Sunday. Naeem Mirza conducted the proceedings. Intellectuals and activists from all corners of the country came to pay homage to Shelly, as she was lovingly called by her friends.

She had many important days in her life she judiciously devoted to her family as well as the cause, said Tahira Abdullah in a choked voice. One such day was February 12 when WAF organised a march against Law of Evidence in Lahore in 1983, which was tear-gassed and lathi charged during Zia period. Shelly was among many others who were arrested. The day is observed as Women's Day in Pakistan.

That epoch-making day was doubly symbolised for Shelly as it was her birthday also that she passed behind the bars.

Nigar Ahmad, the executive director of Aurat Foundation, highlighted her sense of humour, humility, clarity and zeal for work. Dr Faqir Hussain, Secretary Law and Justice Commission, referred to her extraordinary talent and said that she was one of the pioneers that brought the movement to the take-off-stage.

Justice (retd) Majida Rizvi, former Chairperson of National Commission on the Status of Women, recalled her interaction with Shelly, her command over legal issues pertaining to human rights and her role in preparing the report on Hudood Ordinance by the review committee of NCSW.

Nilofar Bakhtiar, advisor to the Prime Minister on Women Development, recalled the untiring efforts of Shelly against discriminatory laws. She pledged to take up the case of Hudood Ordinance as a mark of respect to Shahla Zia. She said that despite the illness of her husband, Shelly fulfilled the promise of preparing a draft on amending the Karo-kari Law though the advisor admitted that the approved law had many flaws.

All the good things in the amended law are because of Shelly and the bad things are because of the government, she candidly confessed.

Justice (ret'd) Shaiq Usmani was straightforward and terse in setting the record straight. Being himself a member of the legal expert team who worked with Shelly on the Karo-kari Bill, he said whatever passed by the Parliament has nothing to do with what Shelly and other members had proposed. He warned against hijacking and encashing the name of Shelly.

Iqbal Haider, former minister of law and general secretary, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said she institutionalised the struggle for human and women rights.

Chandni Joshi, regional director of UNIFEM, based in Nepal said that death of Shelly was a loss for the women emancipation movement in Pakistan, in the SAARC countries and the world. PPP MNA Fouzia Habib said that Shahla taught us laws on women's legal rights and gender issues.

The Aurat Foundation announced a fellowship scheme for law students in the name of Shahla Zia. Messages from CEDAW Committee, women organisations from Bangladesh, India and Malaysia were read on the occasion. Sohail Safdar and Rakhshinda Perveen recited their poems on Shelly. Anees Haroon from Karachi WAF, Muzaffar Mahmood Qureshi, ex-Law Secretary, Marium Bibi, Aysha Khan, Nasreen Azhar also addressed the gathering.

[Source: <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/mar2005-daily/28-03-2005/national/n13.htm>]

Shahla Zia services for women rights eulogised

By Raja Assad Hameed

ISLAMABAD - Law experts, human rights activists, colleagues and friends Sunday paid rich tributes to Shahla Zia for her glorious struggle for creation of a fair, just and humane society and empowerment of women.

In a reference held at ILO Auditorium in remembrance of Shahla Zia, a lawyer by profession and a great women rights activist in her belief and determination, the speakers eulogised Shahla, more commonly known as Shelly among the civil society, for her relentless struggle for the empowerment of women and attainment of rights for marginalised sections of society for more than about three decades.

Those who spoke on the occasion include Advisor to Prime Minister for Social Welfare Nilofar Bakhtiar, former Law Minister Syed Iqbal Haider, Justice (Retd) Shaiq Usmani, Nigar Ahmed, Naeem Mirza and Rakhshanda Naz of Aurat Foundation.

The speakers said the civil society has gathered to celebrate the day in remembrance of Shelly instead of mourning, as she would always live in hearts and minds of those with whom she worked in so many years and for whom she struggled for so many decades.

“We celebrate it because it is a life spent in pursuit of happiness for others, it is a spirit that is indomitable and uncompromising on principles,” read an Aurat Foundation invitation to the reference.

Shahla Zia started her carrier as a lawyer at Lahore in mid seventies by joining Hassan and Hassan Advocates and later worked with AGHS, Shirkat Gaha on women and social issues before forming Aurat Foundation with Nigar Ahmed after a decade where she actively served for rest of her life as an awareness campaigner on women issues.

During her address on the occasion, Nigar Ahmed of Aurat Foundation, who was a long time associate and friend of Shelly, recalled many experiences and events when the departed lady stood beneficial for either her friends and colleagues or the cause she struggled.

Advisor to PM for Social Welfare and Women Development Nilofar Bakhtiar paid tributes to Shahla for her struggle. Nilofar also claimed that Shahla Zia contributed in the recent legislation by present government on honour killing issue.

Justice Shaiq Usmani in his speech unfolded many of his memories regarding the role of Shahla Zia in constitution of National Commission on Status of Women and formulation of its recommendations for uplift of women in the society.

However, Justice Usmani strongly contradicted Nilofar for trying to connect Shahla Zia with the honourkilling bill proposed by the present ruling party in the Parliament.

Syed Iqbal Haider, in his address, told the participants that Shahla Zia braved the torture and hardships during the women movement against Zia regime when it incorporated controversial laws in Constitution such as Qanoon-e-Shahadat and Hudood Ordinance.

At the end, Rakhshanda Naz of Aurat Foundation announced two Shahla Zia scholarships for law students every year for carrying on the mission of deceased lady.

Dr Attiya Inayat Ullah, Tahira Abdullah, Dr Faqir Hussain, Shahnaz Wazir Ali and Shahnaz Bukhari also attended the reference.

[Source: <http://www.nation.com.pk/daily/mar-2005/28/nationalnews3.php>]