Parents and uncle convicted of "honor killing" Pakistani teen in Italy for refusing arranged marriage

December 19, 2023

CBS News

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/saman-abbas-pakistani-parents-uncle-convicted-of-murder-italy/>

A court in northern Italy convicted the parents and an uncle of an 18-year-old Pakistani woman for [her murder in Italy](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/saman-abbas-arrested-pakistan-accused-honor-killing-daughter-saman-abbas-italy/) after she refused her family's demands to marry a cousin in their homeland.

Saman Abbas' body was dug up in November 2022 in an abandoned farmhouse near the fields where her father worked in northern Italy, a year and a half after she was last seen alive on surveillance video walking near the same fields with per parents. Italian prosecutors argued that she was killed by her family on May 1, 2021. A few days later, her parents flew from Milan to Pakistan.

The parents, Shabbar Abbas and Nazia Shaheen, were sentenced to life in prison, while her uncle, Danish Hasnain, was handed a 14-year prison term by a court in Reggio Emilia. Hasnain was detained under a European arrest warrant in France in Sept. 2021,[the BBC reported](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58663644).

Two cousins were found not guilty and ordered released from jail.

Abbas, who was extradited from Pakistan in August, professed his innocence during a tearful statement to the court before deliberations. His wife, Shaheen, was tried in absentia and is believed to be in Pakistan.

The trial was the most high-profile of several criminal investigations in Italy in recent years dealing with the slaying or mistreatment of immigrant women or girls who rebelled against family insistence that they marry someone chosen for them. Saman Abbas, pictured wearing red lipstick and a red headband, has become one of the symbols of public concern in Italy over violence against women by family members or partners, Reuters reported.

An autopsy revealed the young woman had a broken neck bone, possibly caused by strangulation. She had emigrated as a teenager from Pakistan to a farm town, Novellara, in Italy's northern region of Emilia-Romagna.

She quickly embraced Western ways, including shedding her headscarf and dating a young man of her choice. In one social media post, she and her Pakistani boyfriend were shown kissing on a street in the regional capital, Bologna.

According to Italian investigators, that kiss enraged Abbas' parents, who wanted her to marry a cousin in Pakistan.

Abbas had reportedly told her boyfriend that she feared for her life, because of her refusal to marry an older man in her homeland.

Arranged marriages are the norm among many conservative Pakistanis, and hundreds of women are murdered every year in so-called "honor killings" carried out by husbands or relatives as a punishment for alleged adultery or other illicit sexual behavior.

In 2020, [Pakistani authorities arrested two men](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pakistan-honor-killing-women-allegedly-sparked-online-video-showing-them-kissed-by-man/) for allegedly murdering two female family members after a video showing them being kissed by a man was posted online.

And last month, four Pakistani men [were arrested](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/honor-killing-pakistan-doctored-photo-woman-boyfriend-goes-viral-arrests/) in connection with the killing of an 18-year-old woman over a photo that appeared to show her sitting with a boyfriend. Pakistani police later said the photo had been doctored, according to the BBC.