



Centre for
Protecting
Women Online



Centre for Protecting Women Online



Annual Conference

9th & 10th September 2026



The Open
University



Research
England

Centre for Protecting Women Online is funded by the Research
England Expanding Excellence in England (E3) Programme.

"The Price of Being a Woman" is a poem written in remembrance of women and girls lost to male violence in Pakistan.

The images accompanying it represent only a small number of lives, stories, and futures that should have been allowed to continue.

This poem is also deeply personal.

One of the women remembered is my cousin, who was murdered by her father-in-law at the beginning of this year.

Although the poem connects to my research on technology-facilitated domestic abuse against women and girls, it reaches beyond what research alone can express.

It is shaped by grief and anger, and is an attempt to give voice to experiences that many women and girls cannot safely or openly name, while honouring those who no longer can.

"The Price of Being a Woman".

Across the world, both far and near,
A silent war is lived in fear.

With fists and blades that leave their trace,
And violence reaching through cyberspace.

They call it progress, call it free,
Then weaponise technology.

Through hidden codes and glowing screens,
They enter homes and haunt our dreams.

They track our steps, they read our calls,
They watch us through our "smart" home walls.

The locks are smart, and so are they,
Who turn our safety into play.

They whisper threats through voice, through sound,
No safe room left, no solid ground.

A woman's name, a girl's own voice,
Is taken, twisted, stripped of choice.

And still, the world just turns away,
"Not real", they say, as truth decays.

Their systems learn, their profits climb,
While women's freedom fades with time.

They call it speech, a sacred right,
While threats are typed throughout the night.

A threat, a post, a line is crossed,
Yet we are the ones who pay the cost.

We scream for help, but laws do not bend,
They let the cycle start again.

To speak, to walk, to just exist,
To not be hunted from a list.

Is that too much for us to claim?
To live without this endless shame?

I dream of change, I try, I fight,
I beg to bring this wrong to light.

Yet if I speak, I am weak, I am vain,
Too soft, they say, I "love" the pain.

And if I dare to raise my voice,
To beg the world to give us choice,

They roll their eyes, dismiss my part,
Then say, "You are playing the woman card".

That if I cry, I am seeking fame,
And if I speak, it is all a game.

So let me bow, let me concede,
Let all my words be left to bleed

I must be quiet, must comply,
Must apologise and never ask them why.

"How many more rights do you need?" they ask,
As though the rights we had could last.

As though they were not stripped away,
Then handed back with rules to obey.

They say, "Not all men", then turn away,
While violence finds another way.

Yes, not all, but look around,
It is always men who drag us down.

They cannot bear the words we speak,
So call our anger cruel or weak.

They talk their shit about feminism,
Call it poison, call it schism.

But what about the weight we bear?
The toxic men who never care?

The ones who claim their rage is just,
Who turn our bodies into dust.

They mock, they twist, they shift the blame,
Then teach their sons to do the same.

We speak of pain, they hear attack,
And fight to push our voices back.

Instead of standing by our side,
They would rather shout, dismiss, divide.

For men in power love the sight
Of women hiding, bathed in fright.

They watch us suffer, watch us break,
And never lose the sleep they take.

And God, I wish to do the same,
To drown men in this burning shame.

To turn their voices into ghosts,
To haunt their screens in endless posts.

To make them taste this weight, this fear,
To make them beg for laws to hear.

To take their power, strip it bare,
Until they are gasping for fresh air.

But I am not like them.
I will not burn just to condemn.

I will not break what is left to mend,
This war they wage, it has to end.

Men must learn, and the world must see,
That women's safety is a right, not a plea.

- Arwa Bukhtiar