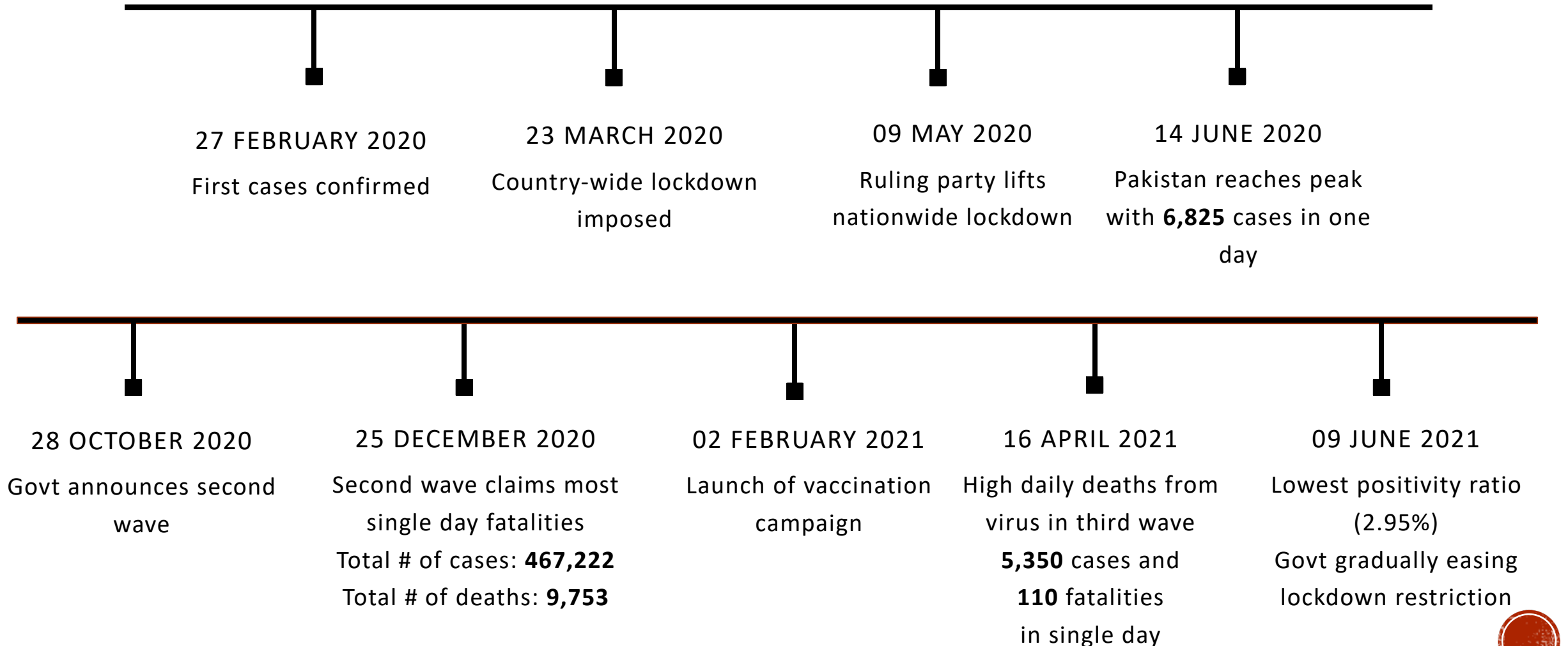


# PAKISTAN: GENDERED PROTESTS DURING COVID-19



# COVID-19 IN PAKISTAN







## HOW IS CIVIC SPACE CLOSING?

Pandemic accelerated trends already in place.

Permission from security/intelligence agencies required for most meetings, gatherings or protests.

NGOs doing advocacy are restricted.

Critics of government, protestors liable to charges of treason.

Enforced disappearance of political dissenters, journalists.

Mass protests and gatherings of religious right-wing organizations permitted.







Health workers' protest October 2020 Source: H. Leghari

## Protests

- Health workers
- Students
- Labour & Livelihoods

## Constraints

- Violence Against Women
- Marginalizing Religious Minorities
- Enforced Disappearances
- Media Controls



alamy stock photo

Students' protest October 2020





# GENDERED PROTESTS

## FEMINIST



## HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS



— Photo by Dawn/Ifle

**ISLAMABAD:** The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the Islamabad capital administration to regularise the services of around 366 lady health workers (LHWs) by Monday.







# HEALTH WORKERS' PROTESTS

Lady Health Workers & nurses demand PPE.

Providers fall ill w/ Covid, demand lockdowns.

LHWs want integration into public sector service structure

Health sector forms alliance to resist privatization of public sector hospitals and demand risk allowance.

Medical students protest against changes to entrance exams







- Prime Minister Imran Khan "in any society where vulgarity is prevalent, there are consequences that's why *purdah* is important."
- Human Rights Ministry and parliamentary HR Committee denounce harassment: state not monolithic?



Women journalists at a hearing on online abuse against female journalists at the Human Rights Committee of Pakistan's National Assembly. Source: Committee to Protect Journalists

*"Women in the media, especially those on social media platforms, are finding it increasingly difficult to remain on these platforms and engage freely. Many now self-censor, refrain from sharing information, giving their opinion or actively engaging online."*





# AURAT MARCH



Increase in GBV and domestic violence, child sexual abuse incidence.

Protests in KP against growing VAW and GBV against transgender community.

High profile cases of honour killings, gang-rape & forced marriages: Motorway rape

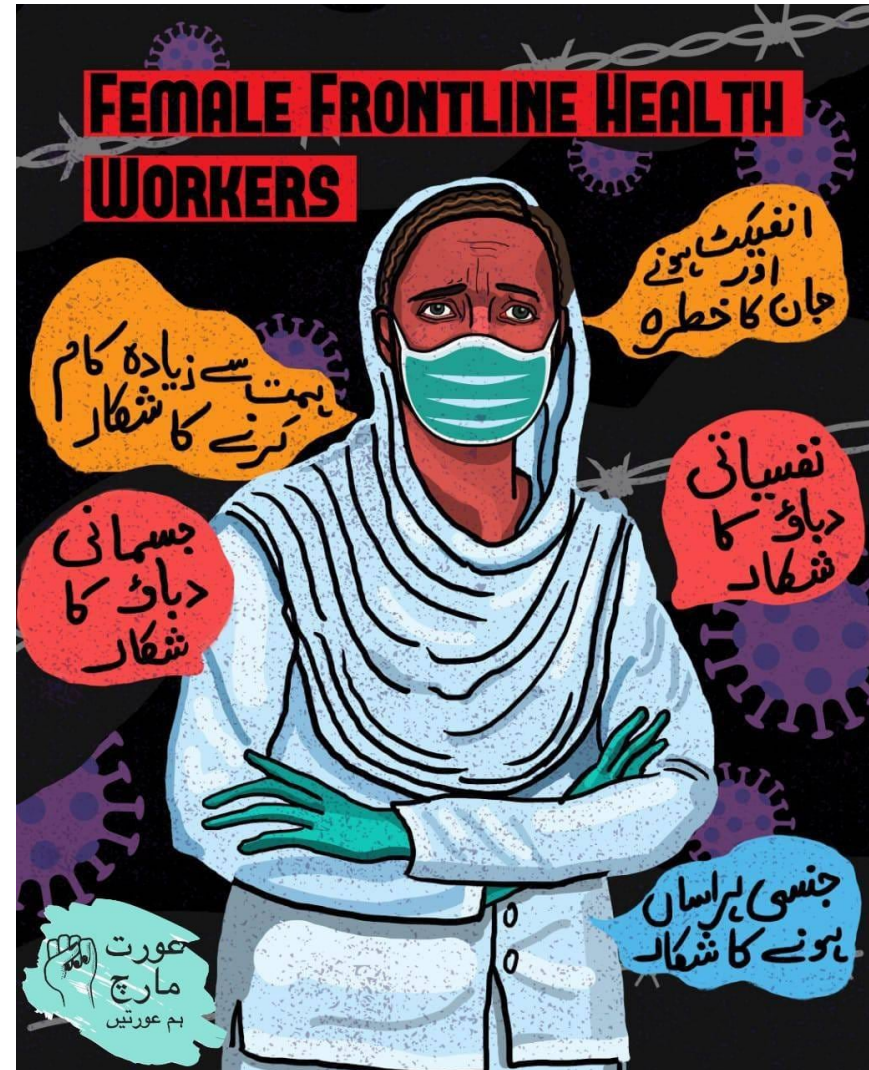
Dissatisfaction w/ new rape laws.

Women journalists sexually harassed, trolled for Covid coverage



# KEY INSIGHTS

- Pandemic exacerbated existing trends.
- Hundreds of protests occurred around Pakistan during research period.
- Women joined new alliances with other groups in health sector.
- Feminist Aurat March brought diverse women's interests together.
- State does not have a monolithic response to gender issues.
- Health & feminist protests may be less contentious/risky than livelihood & security ones as spaces close.
- Opposition political momentum: will it squeeze out civil society space or provide it cover?



Aurat March raising women healthworkers' concerns  
Source: Aurat March Facebook page

