

150 Gulalai

Gulalai Ismail is a very real, very vulnerable young Pakistani woman. After escaping from her own country last year, she fled to the U.S. seeking asylum.

Her crime? Since the age of 16, she has been a human activist speaking out against abuses suffered by Pakistani women, exposing illegal acts committed by government security forces and the Pakistani Military, including rapes and disappearances of women. She also has spoken out against forced marriages and "honor killings" committed by male family members.

The government of Pakistan placed her on its most-wanted list, accusing her of activities including sedition, inciting treason and other charges carrying the death penalty.

Now living in New York, Gulalai still fears for her life and the lives of her family left in Pakistan. A hunted woman, she has no guarantee of security, even here in the U.S.

For me, Gulalai is a reminder of the consequences of speaking truth to power in a totalitarian society, particularly one that is patriarchal. She is a warning to us all, as well as an inspiration.