The Redress Review

VLA — VIRTUAL LEGAL ADVISORY

SANA PIRZADA LEGAL SOLUTIONS

A Weekly Legal Dispatch with Commentary by Sana Pirzada

❖ Editor's Note – Monday 19th May, 2025

This issue of *The Redress Review* delves into the unsettling intersections of violence, accountability, and systemic failure. As global attention turns to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza, we are also confronted with other sobering reflections—harrowing criminal trials, deeply personal acts of violence, and prison systems buckling under pressure. These stories compel us to examine not just the facts, but the fragile state of justice and humanity in an increasingly fractured world.

The Redress Review, is a weekly publication where I, Sana Pirzada, will delve into the most pressing issues of the week. Each article will begin by highlighting a grievance and will conclude with thoughtful proposals for change and pathways to justice. *The Redress Review* is part of the larger initiative known as VLA — Virtual Legal Advisory.

❖ Headline News

(Source: Al-Jazeera)

'When Conscience Defies Command: Dissent in the Israeli Army'

"We need a permanent ceasefire, now," declared United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres at the Arab League summit in Baghdad on May 17, 2025. Expressing deep alarm over Israel's planned military escalation in Rafah and the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Guterres called for urgent action to stop what he described as a "humanitarian nightmare." With over 52,000 Palestinians killed—the majority of them women and children—and an entire population displaced, Guterres' remarks serve as a searing reminder of the human cost of protracted conflict and the ethical dilemmas it poses—not just to the global community, but to those fighting on the ground.

This international outcry finds a poignant echo within the Israeli military ranks. In a deeply revealing article written by Ruth Margalit for *The New Yorker*, the growing dissent within the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has been brought to the forefront. Margalit's piece documents how hundreds of Israeli soldiers and reservists—many of whom initially responded with patriotic fervor after the Hamas attacks on October 7—are now refusing to serve in Gaza.

The reasons are both moral and political. Some objectors have gone public with their refusal, while others simply do not show up when summoned—an act referred to as "quiet refusal." At the heart of their objection lies a profound sense of betrayal. The Israeli government has repeatedly framed its military campaign as being primarily about rescuing the hostages taken by Hamas. But, as Margalit reveals, that objective ranks only sixth in the government's actual list of strategic priorities. According to her article, the six official goals of the war are:

1. Destroying Hamas;
2. Restoring deterrence;
3. Reoccupying Gaza;
4. Preventing Hezbollah's escalation in the north;
5. Avoiding international sanctions;
6. Bringing the hostages home.

This dissonance between the moral justification presented to the public and the actual military objectives has triggered a quiet moral revolt.

One of the most vocal objectors, Eran Tamir, a seasoned infantryman who served several tours in Gaza, wrote in a public letter that "the war effort has become a political manipulation," and that to pretend the campaign is about rescuing hostages is nothing more than "a deception." His words resonate with a growing number of military personnel who now believe they were drawn into a war under false pretenses.

Nearly a thousand current and former Israeli air force personnel have signed a letter demanding a ceasefire and a shift in focus to saving the hostages. Hundreds more—including intelligence officers, medical personnel, and combat soldiers—have followed suit. The IDF has been forced to disband certain units due to widespread refusal, and attendance at reservist trainings has plummeted.

This is not the first time that Israeli soldiers have refused to serve on grounds of conscience. Movements like Yesh Gvul during the 1982 Lebanon War and Mesarvot in more recent years have supported conscientious objectors. But the current wave of refusal is more far-reaching, more fractured, and more vocal in its disillusionment—not just with military policy, but with the trustworthiness of the state itself.

One 27-year-old combat medic recounted being ordered to burn down a home in Gaza without any clear rationale. He refused and walked away. Others have described the long-lasting emotional damage of being part of what they now believe to be an indiscriminate and punitive war.

To refuse military service in Israel is no small matter. It can result in ostracization, arrest, or both. But for these soldiers, to comply would be a deeper betrayal—of their values, their humanity, and their belief in what their country ought to stand for.

As António Guterres and the international community call for an immediate halt to the war, the voices of Israeli dissenters serve as a powerful reminder that moral clarity does not always come from the top. Sometimes it rises from the ranks, where those tasked with carrying out a mission begin to question what that mission really is.

These acts of refusal are more than just protest. They are moral testimonies in a time of moral fog—illuminating not only the cost of war, but the enduring weight of individual conscience.

❖ Global News

(Source: Reuters)

‘The Fall of a Mogul: Diddy's Trial and the Reckoning of Power and Abuse’

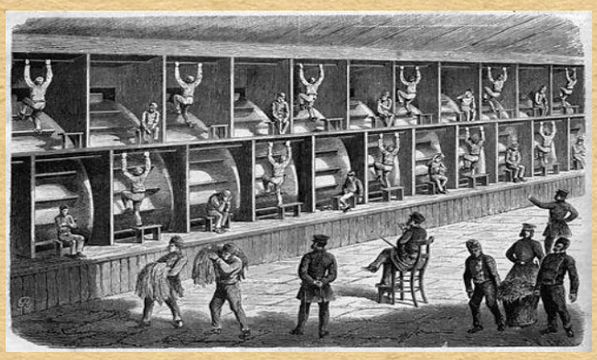
Once hailed as a titan of the music industry, Sean "Diddy" Combs' ongoing federal trial has unveiled a disturbing narrative that starkly contrasts his public persona. The proceedings have brought to light harrowing allegations of abuse, manipulation, and exploitation, challenging the legacy of a man who once epitomized success and influence in entertainment.

Central to the trial is the testimony of singer and former partner, Cassie Ventura. Over four days, Ventura recounted a decade-long relationship marred by physical violence, coercion, and psychological torment. She described being subjected to "freak-offs"—non-consensual, drug-fueled sexual encounters orchestrated by Combs, often recorded for blackmail purposes. One particularly distressing incident from 2016, captured on surveillance footage, shows Combs assaulting Ventura in a hotel hallway—a video that has become a pivotal piece of evidence in the case.

This trial is not an isolated examination of one individual's misconduct but a reflection of systemic issues within the entertainment industry. It underscores how power can be wielded to silence victims and perpetuate cycles of abuse. The revelations from the courtroom have reignited discussions around the MeToo movement, emphasizing the need for continued vigilance and support for survivors of gender-based violence.

The proceedings against Combs serve as a stark reminder that fame and success do not exempt individuals from accountability. They highlight the importance of creating environments where victims feel safe to come forward and are assured that their voices will be heard and validated. As society grapples with these revelations, there is a collective responsibility to ensure that justice is not a privilege of the powerful but a right afforded to all.

❖ ‘Justice & Reform’



(Source: National Emergency Services Museum)

‘Echoes from the Past: Victorian Prisons and the Modern Struggle for Justice and Rehabilitation’

A recent article published in *The Guardian* highlights a sobering reality about the current state of prisons in England and Wales: overcrowded, cramped conditions that severely limit opportunities for rehabilitation and reform. This modern crisis echoes the historical struggles of Victorian-era prisons, prompting us to reflect on how our notions of justice, punishment, and rehabilitation have—and have not—evolved since that era.

The article draws attention to findings from the Chief Inspector of Prisons, who describes conditions so congested that prisoners have little to no access to educational, vocational, or therapeutic programs essential for their rehabilitation. Such conditions risk perpetuating a cycle of reoffending, revealing a systemic failure to balance punishment with the humane treatment and reformation of offenders.

This contemporary predicament is hauntingly reminiscent of Victorian prisons, where the prevailing philosophy was primarily retributive. Punishment was often severe and brutal, with scant attention paid to rehabilitation or the underlying causes of criminal behaviour. Prison conditions were notoriously harsh: dimly lit, overcrowded cells, cold and damp environments, and strict regimes designed to break the spirit rather than mend it.

The Victorian penal system inspired and was critiqued by many literary works that continue to resonate today. Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist* vividly portray the grim realities of Victorian

prisons and workhouses, exposing the dehumanizing effects of such institutions on the vulnerable. Similarly, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* offers insight into the harsh social conditions that often led to crime and incarceration.

The Guardian article reminds us that the Victorian ideals of punishment, often entwined with moralistic judgments and social control, still cast a long shadow on modern justice systems. While Victorian reformers like John Howard and Elizabeth Fry pioneered humanitarian approaches and the idea of rehabilitation, such principles have struggled to take firm root in practice—then as now.

The central tension remains: how can society justly punish wrongdoing while also providing meaningful opportunities for offenders to reform and reintegrate? The cramped and overcrowded Victorian prisons symbolized a justice system that prioritised control over care, and the current situation sadly suggests a reprise of that failure.

Yet, this historical reflection also offers hope. Victorian literature and reform movements ultimately contributed to a gradual transformation of penal philosophy, emphasising rehabilitation, education, and moral improvement. Today's advocates for prison reform can draw on this legacy to push for policies that address not only the safety of society but also the dignity and future of the incarcerated.

❖ Gender Based Violence News

'Recognising the Unborn: A Landmark Judgment for Gender-Based Violence Victims in Pakistan'

In a significant advancement for women's rights in Pakistan, the Peshawar High Court (PHC) has delivered a landmark judgment that redefines the legal treatment of crimes against pregnant women. The court ruled that the killing of a woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy constitutes a double murder, thereby acknowledging the unborn child as a separate victim under the law.

Case Overview
The case involved the 2022 murder of Yasmeen Bibi in Dir Lower district. Six individuals, including her husband, Safeer Khan, were convicted by trial courts under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) for intentional murder and Section 338-C for causing miscarriage. However, the PHC bench, comprising Justice Mohammad Ijaz Khan and Justice Sabitullah Khan, set aside these convictions, stating that the fetus, being 37 weeks old, should be considered a full human life under the law.

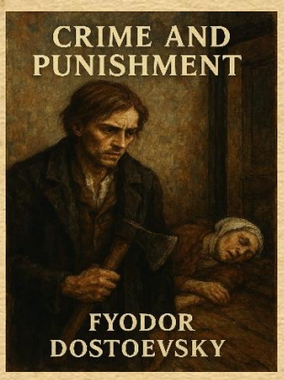
Legal Implications
This judgment shifts the legal perspective on fetal rights in Pakistan. By applying Section 302 of the PPC to the death of the unborn child, the court recognises the fetus as a separate legal entity, deserving of protection under the law. This sets a precedent for future cases involving violence against pregnant women, ensuring that perpetrators can be held accountable for both lives lost.

Impact on Gender-Based Violence Cases
The ruling is a milestone in the fight against gender-based violence in Pakistan. It acknowledges the compounded trauma and loss experienced by victims' families when a pregnant woman is murdered. Furthermore, it sends a strong message that the legal system will take a more comprehensive approach in addressing such heinous crimes, potentially leading to more stringent penalties and deterrents.

Conclusion
The PHC's decision marks a pivotal moment in Pakistan's legal history, especially concerning women's rights and protections. By recognising the unborn child as a separate victim, the court has expanded the scope of justice for victims of gender-based violence. This judgment not only provides a legal

framework for future cases but also reinforces the importance of safeguarding the rights of all individuals, born or unborn, under the law.

❖ Literary Reflections



'This Week's Pick: *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky'

Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is a psychological and philosophical masterpiece. Set in 19th-century St. Petersburg, *Crime and Punishment* follows the tormented journey of Rodion Raskolnikov, a brilliant but impoverished former law student. Convinced that certain individuals possess the moral right to commit crimes for a higher purpose, he murders a corrupt pawnbroker—believing that her death would benefit society and relieve his own desperate circumstances.

However, the murder sets off a psychological unraveling. Despite eluding legal detection, Raskolnikov is haunted by guilt and paranoia. His interactions with various characters—including the saintly Sonya Marmeladov, a downtrodden prostitute with unwavering faith, and Porfiry Petrovich, the cunning investigator who suspects him—drive him toward a painful reckoning. The novel builds toward Raskolnikov's eventual confession and sentencing to Siberia, where Sonya follows him, offering hope for moral regeneration through suffering, humility, and love.

The novel examines themes of guilt, justice, and redemption, exploring how punishment is not only imposed by the law but also endured in the mind and soul. Raskolnikov's internal torment and eventual confession highlight Dostoevsky's central belief in the moral necessity of suffering as a path to spiritual awakening. A profound meditation on conscience, power, poverty, and the human condition, *Crime and Punishment* remains one of literature's most enduring explorations of what it truly means to be just—or unjust.

"Pain and suffering are always inevitable for a large intelligence and a deep heart."

❖ Call for Articles: Voices for Change

If you are an aspiring writer with a passion for social, legal, or political issues, *The Redress Review* welcomes your voice. You are invited to contribute thoughtful articles that highlight injustices, propose solutions, or reflect on the pressing matters of our time.

Please send your submissions to: sanapirzadalegalsolutions@gmail.com

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