

Acid Attacks: A Global Crisis and Path to Prevention

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Abstract

Acid attacks, a heinous act of violence, continue to inflict immense suffering on victims worldwide. This article explores critically the root causes of acid attacks, highlighting their connection to patriarchal norms, societal inequalities, and personal discords. The devastating physical, psychological, and socioeconomic consequences of survivors are examined, underlining the challenges they face in their recovery and reintegration. The paper analyzes the legal and social responses implemented in various countries, including Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Uganda, and Cambodia. By analyzing these responses, the paper assesses their effectiveness in prevention, prosecution, and ensuring justice for victims. Ultimately, this paper calls for increased public awareness, strengthened legal frameworks, improved access to healthcare, and comprehensive support services to minimize pervasive scourge and empower survivors.

Keywords: Acid Attack, Global Crisis, Patriarchy, Humanity, Survivor, Compensation, Rehabilitation.**Copyright © 2024 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

1. INTRODUCTION

VITRIOLAGE or acid attack is an action of throwing acid mainly by a man on a woman or young girls. In a similar vein, it can be expressed that acid violence is a wilful use of acid to attack humankind [1]. Acid attack entails the planned flinging of acid on a victim, typically on her face [2]. In addition to engendering psychological trauma, acid attacks result in acute affliction, everlasting defacement, subsequent infections, and often sightlessness. The perpetrators engage in acid attacks on several grounds, including retort for not accepting marriage proposals or amorous

pursuits, land claims, perceived disgrace and a feeling of envy [3]. Such cruelty can be identify in numerous nations; nonetheless, it is more rampant in countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia [4]and Since 2010, an average of 40 cases annually have been reported in Nepal [5]. The crime of acid assault can be perpetrated against any person without any distinction being made on any basis of sex, age or religion [6].

The most frequent variety of acids operated to strike sufferers are hydrochloric [7], sulphuric [8] and nitric acids [9]. The inorganic acids such as sulfuric acid,

¹ Harish Verma, 'Acid Violence against Women and its Socio-Legal Implications: The Indian Perspective' (2012) 48(3) Civil and Military Law Journal, pp. 197, 198

² Acid Attacks, *UN Women*, (27 January 2011) <<https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/607-acid-attacks.html>> accessed on 15 October 2024

³ "Ibid., para 1"

⁴ Minakshi Goswami, 'A REVIEW OF LITERATURES ON ACID ATTACKS IN INDIA' (2017) 1(2) MSSV JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, p. 1 <<https://www.mssv.ac.in/media-library/uploads/WHPhGSt4s4MBMUrGuPI8L5zdhy0SvXmPVSEcXcu.pdf>> accessed on 15 October 2024

⁵ Arun Buddhathakoi, 'Nepal's Burn Violence Survivors Await New Law' *The Diplomat* (13 April 2021)

available at <<https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/nepals-burn-violence-survivors-await-new-law/#:~:text=The%20organization%20reports%20that%20around,%2C%20education%2C%20and%20living%20expenses>>

accessed on 15 October 2024

⁶ "Supra Note 4, para 1"

⁷ Hydrochloric acid is used to make cosmetics, soy sauce, traditional medicine and amphetamine and to polish the jewellery.

⁸ Sulphuric acid is the world's largest-volume industrial chemical used to manufacture explosives, glue, dyes, wood preservatives, weaving, amphetamine and automobile batteries.

⁹ Nitric acid is used by jewellers, goldsmiths and brass makers to purify metal and golds.

nitric and hydrochloric acid have a local chemical action of abrading and blemishing the tissues that they come into contact with [10]. When the corrosive agents contact the body, an intense deadly reaction takes place. The pure sulfuric acid (oil of vitriol, battery acid) is a colorless, heavy, hygroscopic, oily liquid which discharges no fumes when exposed to the air. When assorted with water, it generates an exothermic reaction. Spiteful people sporadically resort to using sturdy sulfuric acid to maim the face or induce physical deformity by pitching a mass of it at a victim. Electric light bulbs filled with acid are often catapult in civil disorders in urban settings [11].

According to UNICEF [12] research, "Acid attack is a far-reaching trouble throughout the world, even children are becoming victims of acid attack in plenty of cases. In an acid attack, acid is tossed at the face or body of the victim with a conscious target to blight and disfigure them. The majority of victims are females, many of whom are under the age of eighteen, who have refused marriage or sexual requests. The action of pitching acid on someone's body with the purpose of harming or impairing them out of rage or envy is known as an acid attack."

Furthermore, as stated by the latest law of Nepal [13], "acid" means inorganic acid, a chemical substance that burns, causes fatal damage (corrosive) to human organs, animals or other biological or non-organic objects or causes serious effects in any other way, and the term includes nitric acid, sulfuric acid and hydrochloric acid and other hazardous and flammable chemical substances that have been designated by the Nepali government through a notice published in the Nepal Gazette.

2. HISTORY OF ACID ATTACK

Acid has been used in metallurgy since primal times and for etching since the middle ages and antiquity

¹⁰ Navpreet Kaur & Adarsh Kumar, 'A. Vitriolage (vitriolism) - a medico-socio-legal review' (2020) *Forensic Sci Med Pathol*, p. 481 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12024-020-00230-7>> accessed on 15 October 2024

¹¹ "Ibid., para 2"

¹² A/RES/48/104 - 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women' *United Nations General Assembly* <<http://un-documents.net/a48r104.htm>> accessed on 15 October 2024

¹³ Acids and Other Hazardous Chemicals (Regulation) Act 2079, sec. 2(g)

¹⁴ Kalpana Chanderia, 'ACID ATTACK: DISCOVERING A LOST IDENTITY' (2018) 4(8) *JOURNAL ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF LAW*, p.153 <<https://jcil.lsyndicate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Acid-Attack-Kalpana.pdf>>

accessed on 15 October 2024

¹⁵ "Ibid., para 1"

[14]. The lingual and thespian term "La Vitriol use" was inaugurated in France after a "wave of vitriol age" appeared according to the popular press, where in 1879, 16 cases of acid attacks were considerably reported as crimes of passion, performed mostly by women against other women [15].

Much was made of the concept that women, no matter how few, had employed violence as means to an end. In 1915 acid was noxiously thrown on Prince Leopold Clement of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, descendant to the House of Koháry, by his agitated mistress, Camilla Rybicka, who then killed herself. Such sensationalized events have led to profitable sales of newspapers. Subsequently, the use of acid as a weapon began to emanate in Asia. The early noted acid attacks in South Asia happened in Bangladesh in 1967, India in 1982, and Cambodia in 1993. Since then, research has observed an escalation in the quantity and grievousness of acid attacks in the region. However, this can be ferret out to weighty underreporting in the 1980s and 1990s, along with a general laxity of investigation for this occurrence during that time [16]. Thus, the first acid attack case in Nepal was reported in 2013 of Bindabasini Kansakar [17].

3. CAUSES OF ACID ATTACK

Nepali women are generally illustrated as having bounded selections or as debarred to make selections in multiple facets of their lives, such as education, matrimony, medical amenities and walks of life [18]. Patriarchal social values, based on the Hindu religion and its caste system, have been imaged as the ruling reason for all forms of prejudice against women. Women are deemed as subservient subjects in this patriarchal society. Most of the families are directed by men and the women are treated as objects or baby-making machines. Women are affected inordinately in different ways where they are placed in economically frail positions in their families [19]. An acclaimed

¹⁶ "Ibid., para 2, 3"

¹⁷ 'No woman should suffer acid attack like me: Bindabasini Kansakar speaks in Assembly' *ETV Bharat* (18 June 2023) <<https://www.etvbharat.com/english/state/tamil-nadu/no-woman-should-suffer-acid-attack-like-me-bindabasini-kansakar-speaks-in-assembly/na20230618143839886886490>> accessed on 15, Oct 2024. She was an erstwhile acid attack survivor and current lawmaker since 2023 in the National Assembly of Federal Parliament from Rashtriya Swatantra Party.

¹⁸ Radha Adhikari et Jeevan R Sharma, 'Gendered consequences of social changes in Nepal: rich possibilities' (2022) *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, pp. 1-20 available at <<https://doi.org/10.4000/ebhr.549>>

¹⁹ Ibid.

scholar Afroza Anwary in his study argued that acid is used by men on women as a symbol of their dominance and manliness over them and to keep women in their position. Acid attacks are used as a weapon to silence and sway women by dilapidating what is established as the chief constituent of her identity [20]. Therefore, acid attacks promote one of the most vicious displays of well-established patriarchy [21].

Domestic violence is also one of the multiple sources of acid attacks. The partner abuse was observed as a contributing factor in a well-known case of married couple Sanjiv and Aarti Shah. After marriage, Husband Sanjiv tortures his wife for not bringing ample dowry. The tension between both of them was surging. After their friction was unsolved, they concurred on a dissolution in Dhanusha district court. But before the divorce, the husband reached her maternal home and splashed acid on her face [22]. In a similar manner, a 20-year-old, Jenny Khadka was attacked with acid by her spouse Bishnu Bhujel. Hence, the main motive of attack was due to their marital difficulties [23]. Additionally, the lover's revenge after repudiation has also been significant to the acid attack in which, a 27-year-old, Tulasi Sapkota from Nawalparasi died due to injuries from an acid attack. This ghastly incident took place when she refused to marry her alleged boyfriend, Sunil Koirala of Dhading [24]. In cogent with it, a 15-year-old, Muskan Khatun from Birgunj was struck with acid by 16-year-old Samsad Miya as a way to exact revenge after she rejected his companions' romantic overtures [25].

4. CONSEQUENCES OF ACID ATTACK

Acid attack is one of the immoral acts that take place against humankind, resulting in complete enfeeble, loss of prospects and earning, and even social requisitioning. The ramifications are not ephemeral; but,

they last for the remainder of a person's life [26]. Women are not just physically and psychologically anguished rather monetarily and emotionally. Society is reluctant to acknowledge the woman's semblance and holds that some defect is connected with them. Some people present solicitude and pity, while others make dreadful, inconsiderate, and unpalatable comments to them [27].

4.1 Physical Consequences

The acid eats through dyad layers of skin, namely the muscle and fat under it, and may sometimes not only eat through to the bone but also rupture it. The intentness of the distress is determined by the acid's potency and the period of time it is in contact with the skin. Burning will persist until all of the acids have been rinsed off with water. When the acid is hurled on a person's face, it rapidly eats away at their ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. It's possible that the eyelids and lips will also get utterly burned off. The ears shrivel up, and the nose melts, sealing the nostrils, it may blind a victim speedily by crushing their eyes. The skull, forehead, chin and cheeks may lose their skin and bone. The acid burns everything it touches when it spills or drips on the neck, chest, back, arms, or legs [28]. A study established that on average, patients undergo burns to 14% of their body surface area, with areas most generally affected including the face (87% of victims), head and neck (67%), upper limbs (60%) and chest (54%). Around a third of victims (31%) suffered partial or complete cecity [29].

4.2 Psychological Consequences

The survivor of acid attack not only experience physically but it has a mighty psychological consequence in her leading morbid, undistinguished, trepidation, exasperation, low self-esteem, abnormal eating, insomnia, despair, feeling of emptiness and feeling of

²⁰ Afroza Anwary, 'Acid Violence and Medical Care in Bangladesh: Women's Activism as Carework' (2003) 17(2) *Gender and Society*, p. 306

²¹ Ishita Shahi, 'How acid attacks are fueled by a corrosive culture of male entitlement' *The Record* (4 August 2020)

<how-acid-attacks-are-fueled-by-a-corrosive-culture-of-male-entitlement> accessed on 15 October 2024

²² 'High court upholds district court's decision in acid survivor Aarti Shah case' *Republica* (23 March 2023)

<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/high-court-upholds-district-court-s-decision-in-acid-survivor-aarti-shah-

case/#:~:text=Eight%20years%20ago%2C%2028%2Dyear,both%20of%20them%20was%20increasing>

accessed on 15 October 2024

²³ Nayak Poudel, '20-year-old woman battles for life after her husband hurled acid at her' *The Kathmandu Post* (17 May 2019)

<https://kathmandupost.com/valley/2019/05/17/20-year-old-woman-battles-for-life-after-her-husband-hurled-acid-at-her> accessed on 15 October 2024

²⁴ 'Acid attack victim succumbs to injuries' *The Kathmandu Post* (6 February 2017) <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2017/02/06/acid-attack-victim-succumbs-to-injuries

²⁵ Bhusan Yadav, 'A teenage girl was attacked with acid after her father told a man to stop pursuing her' *The Kathmandu Post* (7 September 2019)

<https://kathmandupost.com/province-no-2/2019/09/07/yet-another-acid-attack-badly-injures-15-year-old-girl> accessed on 15 October 2024

²⁶ Raj Kumar Garg & Gopal Bali, 'Indian Legal Response to Acid Attacks on Women: A Critical Analysis' 2022 5(2) *IJLMH*, pp. 1022, 1023 <https://doij.org/10.10000/IJLMH.112924>

²⁷ "Ibid., para 3,5"

²⁸ "Ibid., para 4"

²⁹ Acid Violence in Uganda A Situational Analysis, *Acid Survivor's Foundation Uganda*, November 2011

<https://assets.website-files.com/659e8d981269f42141f3aede/65ad7a16e2f794d0e973c2cf_Uganda_ASFU_Situational_Analysis_Report_FINAL_Nov2011_1.pdf>

desertion which might contribute to lethal suicidal tendencies [30]. It has been nicely articulated that 'beauty is to man as perfume is to flower'. As the prime purpose of the attacker is to make the victim suffer, physically, emotionally, psychologically, etc., and after the acid is thrown, the malefactor is able to achieve his objective resulting in making the victim suffer from the above-stated plights. Psychologically, the victim is diametrically ravaged and exhausted, appearance-wise, self-assurance wise, etc., and the most abominable part is that this is not temporary but indelibly perdurable throughout her life. When the life of a person appears valueless to them, it is evident that such person would be confined in misery, tenebrous and faintness precipitating to insomnia and continued cephalalgia. It might also take to suicidal propensities to boot. There is often an alarm of agitation of another onslaught on themselves or kinships [31].

As an illustration, psychological and physical consequences as aforementioned would need durable care - medically along with mediation from the counsellor to tackle the psychological challenges. Manfred Nowak, human rights expert made assertions on acid attacks as under:

In the case of women victims of acid attacks, they are encountered both by physical challenges, they may need lasting surgical treatment, along with psychological challenges, which necessitate everlasting intercede from counsellors at each phase of the physical recovery [32].

4.3 Social and Economic Consequences

Acid attacks in most cases leave victims hindered in some way, providing them relying on either their better-half or family for regular tasks, including eating and running expeditions. They confront a long-standing bias from society and they become isolated. These reliances are soared by the fact that colossal acid survivors are impotent to find acceptable work, due to damaged sight and physical incapacitation. As a consequence, dissolution, jilt by their husbands is ubiquitous in the social spectrum [33]. Rather than

assisting them, we make their life further bothersome, as we comfort them as we do not like to gaze at their physiognomy for a long time. This method needs to be replaced, as they are grieving not for their mistake; nevertheless, due to the culpability of horrendous men who are roaming around the society freely. Acid attack victims live through substandard conditions in this trauma and their life becomes a brute-than-death experience. Their physical blemish haunts them repeatedly of the enormities executed on them, and a feeling of seclusion and futile always frightens them [34].

Moreover, Sangita was a trailblazer in the fight against acid attacks, herself a victim in 2015. Despite enduring immense physical and psychological trauma, she courageously challenged societal stigma and media sensationalism. Her determination led her to become a vocal advocate for survivors' rights, culminating in a landmark Supreme Court ruling that mandated government financial support for treatment. This crucial provision has come into force in 2018, as a paramount section of the then civil and criminal code. Since then, she has been zealously emboldening other sufferers till date [35]. Afterwards, acid attack victims like Muskan, Jenny, and Pavitra become inspired to regain their state of vitality. Therefore, the acid attack survivors should come forward boldly and fearlessly to challenge the stigma and ensure their rightful place in society [36].

5. NEPAL'S LEGISLATION ON ACID ATTACK

The threat of acid attacks is a reality for women everywhere. An estimated 1,500 acid attacks occur worldwide annually, however this crime is often unreported for fear of reprisal [37]. Nepal also remains one of the most vulnerable nations when it comes to acid attacks [38]. Prior to the enactment of the National Penal (Code) Act, 2017, acid attacks were not explicitly addressed under specific legislation. However, the subsequent introduction of this comprehensive legal framework, encompassing broader categories of hurt or grievous hurt, has provided a robust foundation for the strict regulation and prosecution of acid attacks. Section 193 [39] prohibits causing disfigurement by using acid

³⁰ Shivani Goswami & Rakesh Kumar Handa, 'The Peril of Acid Attacks in India and Susceptibility of Women' (2020) 3(1) *Journal of Victimology and Victim Justice*, p. 77 < <https://doi.org/10.1177/2516606920927247> > accessed on 15 October 2024

³¹ "Ibid., para 1"

³² "Ibid., para 2"

³³ Katherine Nicholls, 'Domestic Abuse' (*Counselling Directory*, 23 May 2022) <<https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/topics/domestic-abuse.html#whatisdomesticabuse> >

³⁴ Arundhuti Das & Subhamoy Banik, 'A STUDY ON ACID ATTACK IN INDIA AND ITS IMPACT' (2019) 6(1) *JETIR*, p. 724 < <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1901194.pdf> >

³⁵ Nisha thapa, 'Acid-Attack survivors of Nepal who challenged the system of the nation and society' (Yeklo, 30 September 2020) <https://www.yeklo.com/read-blog/116_acid-attack-survivors-of-nepal-who-challenged-the-system-of-the-nation-and-socie.html> accessed on 16 October 2024

³⁶ "Ibid., para 3,4,5"

³⁷ Acid Attacks, *ActionAid* (Uk, 23 July 2024) <<https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/vawg/acid-attacks>> accessed on 15 October 2024

³⁸ "Supra note 23, para 4"

³⁹ National Penal Act, 2017 (2074 B.S.), sec. 193

or toxin substances. It states that inflicting physical harm on another person through such methods is forbidden. The offenders who commit facial disfigurement will face 5-8 years of incarceration and a fine of 100,000-500,000 NPR, who commits organ disfigurement will face 3-5 years of incarceration and a fine of 50,000-300,000 NPR along with a full compensation for the victim.

Until 2020, the aforementioned act was applied on acid attack cases. But after the quick intensification of the horrific act, a new ordinance was enacted with tough punitive actions [40]. The criminal code and criminal procedure code were amended by the ordinance. It implies that if someone assaults another person with hazardous acid or chemicals and the victim is injured in the face, ears, eyes, nose, breasts (if the victim is a woman or girl), or other private areas, the attacker faces a maximum 20-year prison sentence and a fine of a maximum one million NPR. The newly laid law specifies that victims of acid attacks would be compensated fairly based on the extent of their injuries [41]. Furthermore, an additional ordinance i.e Acid and other fatal chemical (regulation ordinance 2020) has mentioned that, the government should regulate the sale of harmful chemicals, requiring licenses for specific industries. Sellers must record all sales and maintain detailed customer and stock level information. The chemicals cannot be sold to minors, and authorized buyers are restricted to industries, laboratories, academic institutions, and jewelry shops. Additionally, the government provides free treatment for acid attack victims and prohibits unauthorized fundraising in the name of the victim [42].

6. LEGISLATION ON ACID ATTACK IN OTHER COUNTRIES

As per Acid Survivors Trust International the acid attack has become a global crisis. It is not constricted to regions, religions, or culture. The astronomical number of corrosive attacks occur in low-income and emerging economies, with gargantuan

associated social and economic costs. The article would continue to examine the legal positions of those nations where acid violence has been endemic [43].

6.1 Bangladesh

According to the Acid Survivors Foundation, 3,870 people were attacked with acid between 1999 and 2022 in Bangladesh [44]. The Acid Offence Control Act, 2002, defines "Acid" as including any type of burning, corrosive and poisonous substance [45]. The punishment for causing death by acid is covered in Section 4, if someone causes another person's death by acid, they will either be executed or imprisoned hard for life, and they will also be subject to a fine of up to one lac Taka [46]. The punishment for causing hurt by acid is mentioned in Section 5, a person faces death or austere confinement for life, as well as a fine of up to one lac Taka, if they cause harm to another person in that manner his (a) vision or ability to hear is lost, if face, breast, or sexual organ is defaced; (b) If any other organ, ligament, or bodily part is damaged, the offender faces a tough 14-year maximum sentence as well as a minimum 7-year sentence and a fine of up to 50,000 Taka [47].

6.2 India

In 2021, there were 176 recorded cases of acid attacks, according to data from India's National Crime Record Bureau [48]. Until 2013, there was no particular law in India regarding acid attacks. However, following the landmark Laxmi v. Union of India [49] case, the Supreme Court issued an order banning the selling of acid in consumer stores. The court firmly banned the chemical's over-the-counter sale in order to prevent acid assaults, requiring the vendor to maintain a record of the buyer's address, additional details, and the amount purchased. Dealers could only trade the chemical after the buyer presented a state-sanctioned identity card and specified the purpose of buying. The seller was required to provide the details of the sale to the local police within 3 days of the transaction. Anyone under the age of eighteen could not purchase acid, and all stocks need to

⁴⁰ 'New Law Proposes Jailing acid attackers for 5-20 years' *OnlineKhabar English* (25 September 2020) <<https://english.onlinekhabar.com/new-law-proposes-jailing-acid-attackers-for-5-20-years.html>> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁴¹ 'Laws relating to acid attack in reference to the Muluki criminal code 2074 and case law of sangita magar' (Blog, *The Digital Lawyer*, 11 April 2022) <<https://www.thedigitallawyer.info/blog/laws-relating-to-acid-attack-in-reference-to-the-muluki-criminal-code-2074-and-case-law-of-sangita-magar>>

⁴² 'Ibid., para 7'

⁴³ 'Corrosive violence is a global problem' *Acid Survivors Trust International* <<https://www.asti.org.uk/learn/a-worldwide-problem>> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁴⁴ Asma Sultana Prova & Rafia Mahmud Prato, 'Triumph over terror: How Bangladesh came together to

end acid violence' *The Business Standard* (25 May 2024) <<https://www.tbsnews.net/features/panorama/triumph-over-terror-how-nation-came-together-end-acid-violence-859561#:~:text=According%20to%20ASF%20data%20C%20there,survivors%20between%201999%20and%202023>> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁴⁵ Bangladesh Acid Offence Control Act 2002, sec. 2(b)

⁴⁶ Bangladesh Acid Offence Control Act 2002, sec. 4

⁴⁷ Bangladesh Acid Offence Control Act 2002, sec. 5

⁴⁸ Dipu Rai, 'Scars of life: Thousand acid attacks in India in 5 years, yet very few survivors got justice' *India Today* (15 December 2022)

<<https://www.indiatoday.in/diu/story/acid-attacks-in-india-over-thousand-in-5-years-yet-very-few-got-justice-2309627-2022-12-15>> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁴⁹ Laxmi v. Union of India, 2014 4 SCC 427

be reported to the local Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) within fifteen days. Stocks that are not reported may be seized, and the non-payer may be charged with 50,000 INR. Thus, acid attack is now a non-bailable and cognizable crime.

After this judgement, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, resulted in the installation of new specific laws dealing with acid violence. The Indian Penal Code, Section 326A [50] formulates that, an acid assault has a minimum sentence of 10 years in penal institution, with the possibility of life incarceration along with fine. Similarly, The Indian Penal Code, Section 326B [51] stipulates that, attempted acid throwing carries a minimal ruling as five years and a maximal ruling as seven years in confinement along with fine.

6.3 Pakistan

The Acid Survivors Foundation Pakistan (ASF) reports that there were at least 3,412 acid attacks in between 1999 and 2019, affecting approximately 3,791 victims. On average, 200 acid attacks were reported annually during this period [52]. In order to address the rising occurrence of acid attacks in Pakistan, the government introduced the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention (Amendment) Act, 2010 and added section 336B to the country's penal code which says, anyone who causes harm through acid attacks faces a minimum sentence of 14 years in incarceration, with the possibility of an extension to life in prison, as well as a fine of one million PKR [53]. The Acid and Burn Crime Bill 2017, approved by the Pakistani National Assembly, outlaws acid and burn related barbarity by furnishing speedy and fair trials of such repugnant action. It states that anyone who wittingly causes harm through acid or burn attacks faces a minimum of seven years in harsh prison, and anyone who commits an offence that results in the death of another person faces the death penalty. The bills set forth gratis medical care and rehabilitation for acid victims, and a procedure for holding accused trials as quickly as feasible [54].

⁵⁰ Indian Penal Code, sec. 326A

⁵¹ Indian Penal Code, sec. 326B

⁵² Muhammad Shahzad, 'Woman falls victim to acid attack in Lahore' *The Express Tribune* (21 September 2019) <<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2062127/woman-falls-victim-acid-attack-lahore#:~:text=Acid%20throwing%20was%20a%20serious%20issue%20in%20Pakistan.&text=According%20to%20Acid%20Survivors%20Foundation,as%20many%20as%203%2C791%20victims>> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁵³ Pakistan Penal Code, sec. 336B

⁵⁴ See, <https://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1527223731_946.pdf> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁵⁵ Patrick Norén, 'London Burning: Corrosive Substance Attacks in the U.K.' *CBNW* (10 July 2024) <<https://nct->

6.4 United Kingdom

The prevalence of acid attacks in the United Kingdom has exhibited a marked upward trend in recent decades. After rising sharply during the 2010s and reaching a high point in 2017, the number of cases reported kept rising sharply [55]. There was a 69% increase between 2021 and 2022, with a further 75% increase in 2023. In England and Wales alone, the situation reached a new ignominious level in 2023, with official figures released in June 2024 revealing a staggering 75% surge from the previous year, totaling 1,244 recorded incidents. The UK's status as a global centre for these attacks have been cemented by petrifying trends [56]. The acid attacks are prosecuted under Section 29 of the Offences against the Person Act 1861 [57], which states, anyone who wilfully and unlawfully causes any gunpowder or other explosive substance to explode, delivers to, received by any person, any other dangerous substance puts or throws at or upon or otherwise applies to any person any corrosive substance, with intent in any of the aforementioned cases to burn, maim, disfigure any person, or to cause them severe bodily harm, be guilty of a felony, and upon conviction, they might face life in prison or, at the court's discretion, be placed in penal servitude. The Offensive Weapons Act, passed by the UK government in 2019, established regulations to the possession, sale, and delivery of corrosive substances [58].

6.5 Uganda

According to the Acid Survivors Foundation Uganda (ASFU), 382 victims of vitriol attack were recorded between 1985 and 2011. Of the 382 instances, the majority (58%) were recorded in Uganda's central region alone [59]. In 2018, the End Acid Violence campaign group received reports of 42 occurrences, with the reasons listed as relationship quarrels and jealousy [60], domestic contentions, land-related disputes, business competition etc [61]. Every socio-economic class in Uganda is impacted by acid violence, from the most impoverished to the most powerful and wealthy

<[cbnw.com/london-burning-corrosive-substance-attacks-in-the-u-k/](https://www.cbnw.com/london-burning-corrosive-substance-attacks-in-the-u-k/)> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁵⁶ "Ibid., para 3"

⁵⁷ UK Offences against the Person Act 1861, sec.29

⁵⁸ Offensive Weapons Act 2019 <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/17>>

⁵⁹ "Supra note 29, pp. 5-6"

⁶⁰ 'Burnt to the bone: Uganda's acid attack survivors seek justice' *France 24* (2020), <<https://www.france24.com/en/20200217-burnt-to-the-bone-uganda-s-acid-attack-survivors-seek-justice>> accessed on 16 October 2024

⁶¹ Report No. 226, Uganda, *AdvocateKhoj* <<https://www.advocatekhoj.com/library/lawreports/inclusionofacidattacks/18.php?Title=The%20Inclusion%20of%20Acid%20Attacks%20as%20Specific%20Offences%20in%20the%20Indian%20Penal%20Code%20and%20a%20law%20for%20Compensation%20for%20Victi>

[62]. The Uganda Penal Code 216, Section 216 [63] addresses Acts intended to cause grievous harm or prevent arrest, “unlawfully throws any such fluid or substance at any person, or otherwise applies any such fluid or substance to any person, carry out a felony and is responsible to life incarceration.”

6.6 Cambodia

A study conducted by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) between 2009 to 2013 identified 35 reported cases of acid violence in the media. Experts estimate that the number of unreported or hidden cases may be equal to those reported cases [64]. The Legislature of Cambodia passed the Law on Regulating Concentrated Acid (the Acid Law) in 2011, and it came into effect in 2012. The Acid Law's Article 5 [65], regulates the manufacture, development, import, export, packing, transportation, possession, distribution, purchase, sale, storage, and use of all forms of concentrated acid in order to obtain a license or authorisation letter. Article 16 of the Acid Act [66] states that, deliberate killing using concentrated acid carries a sentence of 15–30 years in jail. In accordance with the new law, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court sentenced 49-year-old criminal Bin Soeun to five years in prison and ten million compensation in the beginning of 2013 [67].

7. PROCEDURES IN ACID ATTACK CASES

Acid attacks are fearful, callous and life-threatening. With thousands speaking out against this painful materiality, the nation needs to contend with it unremittingly. To eradicate such social evil, it is imperative to empower individuals with knowledge on post-incident legal procedures [68]. The praxis in acid attack cases in Nepal typically comprises the following steps:

- **Medical treatment:** In the case of immediate measures, one should douse the affected area

with clean water continuously until the burning sensation subsides. This will disperse the chemicals and help in minimizing the burning and melting of the skin [69]. Under the procedure for treating acid attack victims 2078, people who are attacked with acid can get free treatment services from the public health institutions in the country [70] Moreover, the hospital should preserve evidence, such as clothing and samples of the acid used, for later use in the investigation and trial [71].

- **Reporting the crime:** The National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act, 2017, Section 4 [72] has enshrined that the first information report on the commission of acid violence can be reported to any nearby police station.
- **Police investigation:** According to the National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act, 2017, Section 10 [73], the police conduct an investigation immediately after a first information report. In section 22 [74] of the very act, the investigating authority can request a public hospital for a forensic examination.
- **Filing a case:** The National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act, 2017, Section 32 [75] mentioned that in view of the proof and evidence collected by investigation, the concerned government attorney has to submit the charge sheet to the concerned court.
- **Trial:** As per the National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act, 2017, Section 123 [76], the judgement is to be made immediately if the accused pleads guilty of the offence. Section 129 [77] has underlined the trial of cases to be conducted in open bench, whereas section 131 [78] has epitomized that judges may make judgement within one month after the submission of the chargesheet to the court.

ms%20of%20Crime&STitle=Uganda > accessed on 17 October 2024

⁶² “Ibid., para 2”

⁶³ Uganda: The Penal Code Act (Cap. 120), 1950, sec. 216(g)

⁶⁴ See, CCHR Report <<https://sithi.org/acid-attack>> accessed on 17 October 2024

⁶⁵ Cambodia Acid Law 2012, art. 5

⁶⁶ Cambodia Acid Law 2012, art. 16

⁶⁷ Joe Freeman & Lieng Sarith, ‘First case prosecuted under the new Acid Law’ *The Phnom Penh Post* (29 January 2013) <<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/first-case-prosecuted-under-new-acid-law>> accessed on 17 October 2024

⁶⁸ Sayantani Nath, ‘How to Provide Emergency Medical Care In Case of an Acid Attack: The Do’s and Don’ts’ *The Better India* (12 December 2019) <<https://www.thebetterindia.com/206130/chhapaak-acid-attack-how-to-help-victim-emergency-treatment-helpline-india/>> accessed on 18 October 2024

⁶⁹ “Ibid., para 2”

⁷⁰ Procedures for Treatment of Acid-attack Victims, 2078 <<https://publichealthupdate.com/procedures-for-treatment-of-acid-attack-victims-2078/>> accessed on 18 October 2024

⁷¹ Naimul Razzaque, ‘Acid Violence in Bangladesh: An Overview’ (2023) 6(2) Sch Int J Law Crime Justice, p.125

<https://saudijournals.com/media/articles/SIJLCJ_62_1_22-126.pdf> accessed on 18 October 2024

⁷² National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 4

⁷³ National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 10

⁷⁴ National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 22

⁷⁵ National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 32

⁷⁶ National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 123

⁷⁷ National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 129

⁷⁸ National Criminal Procedure (Code) Act 2017, sec. 131

- **Compensation:** The victims are entitled to compensation from the government or the accused. The victim may receive a maximum of one million NPR as compensation, where if the perpetrator is found guilty, then a maximum of 20 years of rigorous imprisonment is inflicted under the new ordinance of 2020 [79].

The acid attacks involve an extensive amount of psychological and social stigma. It is vitally important to give the survivor strength and support [80]. It's paramount to note that the above steps may vary depending on the specific circumstances of each case; notwithstanding, it's advisable to seek legal counsel for genuine guidance [81].

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The most heinous kind of barbarity against a person, especially a woman, is an acid attack. It has become a pervasive issue worldwide, including in Nepal. These attacks inflict severe physical, mental, and economic suffering, leading to lifelong challenges for victims. All the countries have been involved in clearing the path for meaningful support to sufferers with pressing laws. Despite having harsh laws, there are still growing concerns for robust implementation of Acid Ordinance 2020 in the Nepalese society [82]. Victims often struggle to file a claim and have faith in the justice system, where accessing equitable medical treatment remains slow-moving [83]. To effectively address this crisis, laws should prioritize a thorough approach to preventive measures alongside strict penalties in every incidence. Moreover, some recommendations are put forward to assist in contending with this grave offence and to help the survivors:

- (i) **Increasing Public Education & Awareness:** Public education is a crucial tool for preventing corrosive substance attack. By raising awareness about the severe effects of these attacks and promoting empathy and humanism towards survivors, the deeply ingrained societal issues such as patriarchy, gender-based violence, and harmful cultural attitudes can be addressed.
- (ii) **Strengthening Laws & Enforcement:** The laws against acid attacks must be strictly enforced, with severe penalties on offenders without any compromise. Each and every victim must have access to a fair and efficient justice system, including legal help and adequate compensation.
- (iii) **Proper Treatment & Medication:** The access to specialized medical facilities, such as burn units and reconstructive surgery centers should be more extensively distributed throughout Nepal. The survivors who seek treatment in cities with higher cost of living should receive the appropriate financial support. The establishment of comprehensive aftercare programs is imperative to address the needs of survivors staying in a supportive environment.
- (iv) **Partnership & Collaboration:** The collaborative efforts between government agencies, civil society organizations, media houses, and the international community are vital for minimizing acid violence successfully. These partnerships will reinforce comprehensive support for survivors, including medical care, livelihood support, legal advocacy, and social rehabilitation.

⁷⁹ “Supra note 41, para 2”

⁸⁰ “Supra note 68, para 5,6”

⁸¹ “Supra note 71, para 5”

⁸² Binod Ghimere, ‘Harsh laws are prepared but not always implemented effectively, past records show’ *The Kathmandu Post* (28 September 2020) <<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/09/28/harsh-laws-are-prepared-but-not-always-implemented->

[effectively-past-records-show](https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/09/28/harsh-laws-are-prepared-but-not-always-implemented-effectively-past-records-show) > accessed on 19 October 2024

⁸³ Ram Kumar Kamat, ‘Anti-acid attack law helping victims, but not so well’ *The Himalayan Times* (12 September 2023) <<https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/anti-acid-attack-law-helping-victims-but-not-so-well> > accessed on 20 October 2024