



BEENISH FATIMA

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Podcast Insights

Policing with Purpose

Key Insights from the Podcast with SP Beenish Fatima

In a country where women make up less than 2% of the police force, SP Beenish Fatima is breaking barriers and redefining what it means to serve, protect, and lead. Her journey, as shared in an evocative podcast conducted by Accountability Lab under the “Strengthening Women’s Representation in the Pakistani Judiciary” project, supported by UN Women, reflects the challenges and triumphs of being a woman in Pakistan’s justice system — and the urgent need to reform it.

From a Legacy of Law to a Life in Policing

Born into a family of lawyers and judges, Beenish Fatima’s upbringing was steeped in legal conversations, courtroom tales, and a deep respect for the law. Yet, it wasn’t the court that called her—it was the chaos of the streets, the challenge of uncertainty, and the desire to serve directly. With a degree in Economics from NUST and a high-ranking pass in the CSS exams, Beenish chose the police service—motivated not by tradition, but by a desire to lead from the front.

Her inspiration? Her father, a former Supreme Court judge, who saw in her the courage and competence to command authority. “He always told me: never show fear, even when you’re afraid,” she recalls. That ethos still drives her.

On the Frontlines of Crime, Courage, and Reform

As SP of Rawalpindi’s Organized Crime Unit—the first woman to hold this position—Beenish has dealt with Pakistan’s most complex and dangerous criminal networks. From car theft rings operating across provinces to ransom gangs exploiting TikTok to coordinate crimes, her insights reveal the sheer sophistication of contemporary crime and the pressing need for digital literacy in law enforcement.

More striking, however, is her philosophy of policing: “The criminal is not your enemy. He’s part of your society. He’s deviated, not anti-state.” This compassionate yet pragmatic stance calls for a shift in mindset—from one of retribution to one of reintegration.

Her message is clear: until Pakistan builds a justice system that rehabilitates, not just punishes, it will remain trapped in a cycle of repeat crime. She describes jails as “universities of crime” where offenders learn new techniques and exit more dangerous than before. Without vocational training and post-release reintegration, incarceration does little to serve justice—or society.

Systemic Barriers for Women in Uniform

Throughout her career, Beenish has challenged the gender norms of the police force. While her seniors respected her for her professionalism, the day-to-day culture—especially in rural postings—often reflected deep-rooted biases. Language, hierarchies, and the presence of hardened criminals create a space where authority must be constantly asserted.

Yet she remains undeterred. “When your competence speaks, your gender becomes irrelevant,” she says. This aligns directly with the objectives of the project “Strengthening Women’s Representation in the Pakistani Judiciary” to dismantle stereotypes and create space for women to thrive in the justice system.

Representation, she believes, has a ripple effect. When young women see role models like her in uniform, it challenges their inherited ideas of what’s possible. “When I joined, there were three women in my batch. Now there are six. The top-ranked ASP today is a woman,” she notes. Change, though incremental, is undeniable.

Reclaiming Public Trust in the Police

One of the most pressing themes in Beenish’s podcast is the issue of public perception. “Policing is the only profession that generates 50% negative feedback by default,” she quips. Even when justice is served, it rarely translates into gratitude. The one aggrieved party that feels unheard is often louder than the dozen whose cases were resolved.

She emphasizes that the police force was historically never trained in public relations—only in crime prevention. That is now changing. With social media, police officers have begun sharing their side of the story, humanizing the force, and building community trust.

A notable case she recounts—the recovery of a newborn baby abducted from a hospital—epitomizes the emotional labor and sleepless nights officers endure. Despite backlash in the press, the heartfelt prayers of the mother remain her most valued reward. “I remember that child even today—his age, his mother’s tears—it all stays with me,” she says.

Criminal Networks, TikTok, and Tech-Savvy Offenders

One of the most surprising revelations from the podcast is the role of social media, particularly TikTok, in shaping criminal behavior. From recruitment into car theft gangs to planning and coordinating kidnappings, young offenders are increasingly drawn to influencers who glamorize a lifestyle of crime.

Beenish stresses the need for responsible digital regulation. “We’re not trying to silence voices,” she says. “But we must recognize that teenage boys, unemployed and impressionable, are getting inspired by content that celebrates weapons, fast money, and violence.” Her investigations revealed that some criminals communicated via TikTok comment sections under obscure videos—evading surveillance with alarming ingenuity. The implications for cybercrime prevention are profound and urgent.

Gender, Justice, and the Rule of Law

Beenish’s work directly addresses the objectives of the UN Women project, which seeks to mobilize young women to join justice sector institutions, increase visibility of women’s contributions, and enhance public awareness of how justice systems handle gender-based violence (GBV). In her words, gender plays no role in competence: “When I assign a task, I don’t see if it’s a man or woman. I see who can get the job done.” Still, she acknowledges the added challenges women face—not just in physical spaces, but in societal perception. “You walk into a rural setting, and the gaze shifts. But within minutes, if you’re professional, it all changes.”

Her emphasis on empathy and strategic restraint—like choosing not to enter a high-risk raid to protect her team—reflects a leadership style that values life over ego. It is this balance of strength and compassion that makes her a powerful role model for women in law enforcement.

Looking Ahead: What Needs to Change

For real transformation, Beenish outlines key reforms:

- A structured, merit-based system that recognizes the mental and emotional toll of policing and provides support for officers.
- Prisons must serve as institutions of learning, with vocational training and psychological counseling.
- As criminal tactics evolve, so must policing—through training in cyber forensics, online tracking, and international data-sharing protocols.
- Public trust can only be rebuilt by embedding police officers in the community as protectors, not punishers.
- More women in leadership roles in the judiciary, police, and prosecution will ensure a justice system that reflects society’s diversity and needs.

SP Beenish Fatima is not just enforcing the law—she’s redefining it. Her story exemplifies the ethos of “Strengthening Women’s Representation in the Pakistani Judiciary” project that visible leadership by women in justice sector institutions can shift public attitudes, encourage young aspirants, and reform entrenched systems.

Through courage, intellect, and empathy, she is proving that a new kind of policing—and a new kind of justice—is possible in Pakistan.