

A conceptual image featuring a bright red heart enclosed within a dark metal wire cage. A gold-colored padlock is attached to the bottom of the cage. The entire scene is set against a light blue background with faint, horizontal chains of metal links at the top and bottom edges.

FORCED MARRIAGE &
HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

IS AGAINST
THE LAW

HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the perceived honour (or 'izzat') of the family or community. It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture.

Honour based violence might be committed against people who:

- Participate in activities that are considered against culture or faith
- Become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend even if from the same culture or religion
- Become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion
- Want to get out of a forced marriage
- Wear clothes that are not approved of
- Identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- Want a divorce

“ Although women and girls are the most common victims of honour crimes, men and boys can be victims too. ”





Banaz Mahmood, of Iraqi Kurdish heritage, killed at the age of 20. She was strangled in January 2006. Her body was put in a suitcase and taken out of London and buried in a garden in Birmingham.

Banaz had been married off at the age of 16. She was murdered because she left her violent husband at the age of 19 and fell in love with another man. Her father, uncle, cousins and family friends murdered her. They thought she had brought shame on the family. Her father, uncle and cousins were sentenced to life for her murder in 2007.



Shafilea Ahmed, of Pakistani heritage, killed at the age of 17. She lived with her parents in Warrington, Cheshire. Shortly before her disappearance in 2003 she had travelled to Pakistan where she rejected a marriage and swallowed bleach, badly scarring her throat.

Shafilea's dismembered body was found on the banks of the River Kent in 2004. In 2012 Shafilea's parents were convicted of her murder and imprisoned for 25 years.



Amrit Kaur Ubhi, of Indian Sikh heritage, killed at the age of 24. In 2010, she was found dead in her family home in Telford, Shropshire. Amrit's father could not accept her Western lifestyle and disapproved of her soldier boyfriend because he was a white English man. During an argument, he beat Amrit around the head and strangled her. He was convicted in 2011 for murder and sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered to serve a minimum of 15 years.

FORCED MARRIAGE

What is Forced Marriage?

ARRANGED MARRIAGE

A marriage conducted when families help find and choose a spouse **BUT** the person is **FREE** to accept or decline the marriage.

FORCED MARRIAGE

A marriage conducted when families find and choose a spouse **BUT** the person **DOES NOT CONSENT** or consent is obtained under **DURESS**.

Some forced marriages take place in the United Kingdom with no overseas element. However, other cases involve one of the parties coming from overseas to Britain to marry against their will or a British citizen being forcibly sent or tricked into going abroad to marry where the individual does not consent to the marriage.



Some Facts

- Approximately 8000 actual or threatened forced marriage cases are reported every year
- The government Forced Marriage Unit handled cases involving more than 70 countries, however two thirds of cases are from South Asia
- In 2013, the government Forced Marriage Unit handled cases involving Pakistan (42.7%), India (10.9%), Bangladesh (9.8%)
- Most (approximately 85%) forced marriage victims are female.
- Although forced marriage victims can be any age, most cases involve girls and young women aged up to about thirty
- Forced marriage cannot be justified on religious grounds
- Some forced marriage cases involve victims with disabilities
- Some forced marriage cases involve victims who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)

Tahira's Story

Tahira was stopped from continuing with her college course and taken to Pakistan to marry her cousin. When she refused she was beaten. She was raped on her wedding night and for the next two weeks while she was in Pakistan. When Tahira returned to the UK, she was closely monitored and could not contact her friends. She was chaperoned when she needed to leave the house to go to the doctor or to sign on. Eventually Tahira managed to alert someone about her situation. She was moved to a refuge and her cousin was prevented from entering the UK.



What the Law Says

(In England and Wales)

CIVIL LAW

Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act 2007

A similar law has also been passed in Scotland in 2011. Courts can make Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPO) to:

- Prevent a person being forced into marriage (e.g. Seizing passports, prevented from being taken abroad etc)
- Protect a person who is in a forced marriage

CRIMINAL LAW

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

This Act makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry and includes:

- Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
- Marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they are pressured to or not)

WARNING

Disobeying a Forced Marriage Protection Order can result in a sentence of up to 5 years in prison

WARNING

Forcing someone to marry can result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison

Consequences of a Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a serious abuse of human rights and a form of domestic abuse. There are far reaching consequences of forced marriage which include:

- Domestic violence
- Rape
- Being taken to an unfamiliar environment / kidnap
- Loneliness and isolation from peers and friends
- Depression and mental health issues
- Increased risk of self harm and suicide
- Interruption or loss of educational and career opportunities
- Interruption or loss of job



Safina's Story

Safina wanted to go to university but her parents wanted her to marry her cousin in Pakistan. Safina's family agreed to let her study at university providing she married her cousin. She reluctantly agreed and married her cousin. Upon returning from Pakistan Safina was told she had to delay going to university and find a job instead to enable her husband to get his spousal visa. Once her husband arrived from Pakistan she was allowed to go to university. However, within a few months her husband demanded she leave her course and accused her of being too Westernised and subjected her to domestic violence.

Halima's Story

Halima was studying at university. Her parents found out that she had a boyfriend. They took her out of education and prevented her from contacting her friends. They also confiscated her mobile phone. They planned to take her to Bangladesh to get her married to her cousin. Her friends from university contacted the police who visited the family home and Halima was prevented from being taken abroad.

Safety Advice

If you have escaped a forced marriage / honour based violence or a potential forced marriage / honour based violence situation, and are in danger from your family, then take the following steps:

- Report concerns to the police
- Change bank statement / mobile bill addresses
- Change mobile phone and / or take location tracker off mobiles
- Keep a low profile on social media
- In extreme situations consider changing your identity e.g. changing name and national insurance number



“Men can also be victims of forced marriage.”

Sandeep's Story

Sandeep was forced to marry a Sikh man. She had to stop going to college and was not allowed to get a job. She was raped regularly. When Sandeep had her baby, she had to beg her husband to buy nappies and baby food because she was financially dependent upon him. However, he would demand sex in exchange for those items. When she asked her parents for help, they told her that they had not spent tens of thousands of pounds on a wedding for her to come back home and bring shame on to the family.

Asma's Story

Asma was 17 years old and studying for her A levels. Asma went on what she thought was a family holiday to Pakistan over the Christmas period. Her father and uncles told her she had to get married. Asma managed to alert someone about her situation. The British Foreign Office worked with the British Embassy in Pakistan to rescue Asma and bring her back to the UK. She was placed in safe accommodation and was able to continue with her education at a different college.

Rizwan's Story

Rizwan went on a family holiday to Pakistan and was pressurised to marry his cousin. His parents emotionally blackmailed him saying that it is his duty to look after them and by marrying a cousin he could ensure they were cared for. Rizwan was coerced into the marriage. However, Rizwan was unhappy and decided to also marry his long-term girl friend after a year. He remains in a polygamous marriage to please his family.

Safety Advice

If you think that you may be at risk of a forced marriage or honour based violence while visiting family abroad, do not travel abroad. If you decide to take the risk, inform someone trusted about your concerns such as a close friend, teacher or police etc. Provide them with the following information:

- Your passport details
- A recent photograph
- Your current address and address of where you are travelling to
- Other travel details such as flight details and dates as well as expected return dates

Also memorise contact details of the Forced Marriage Unit and the British Embassy located in the country you are travelling to. You can also alert airport staff if you are being forced to leave the country.



Why does forced marriage happen?



Reasons why parents and families force people into unwanted marriages include:

- The notion of “family honour”
- Attempting to strengthen family links
- Ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family
- Preventing relationships considered to be “unsuitable”
- Assisting claims for residence and citizenship
- Controlling unwanted behaviour and sexuality
- The need to provide a carer for a person with mental and/or physical disabilities

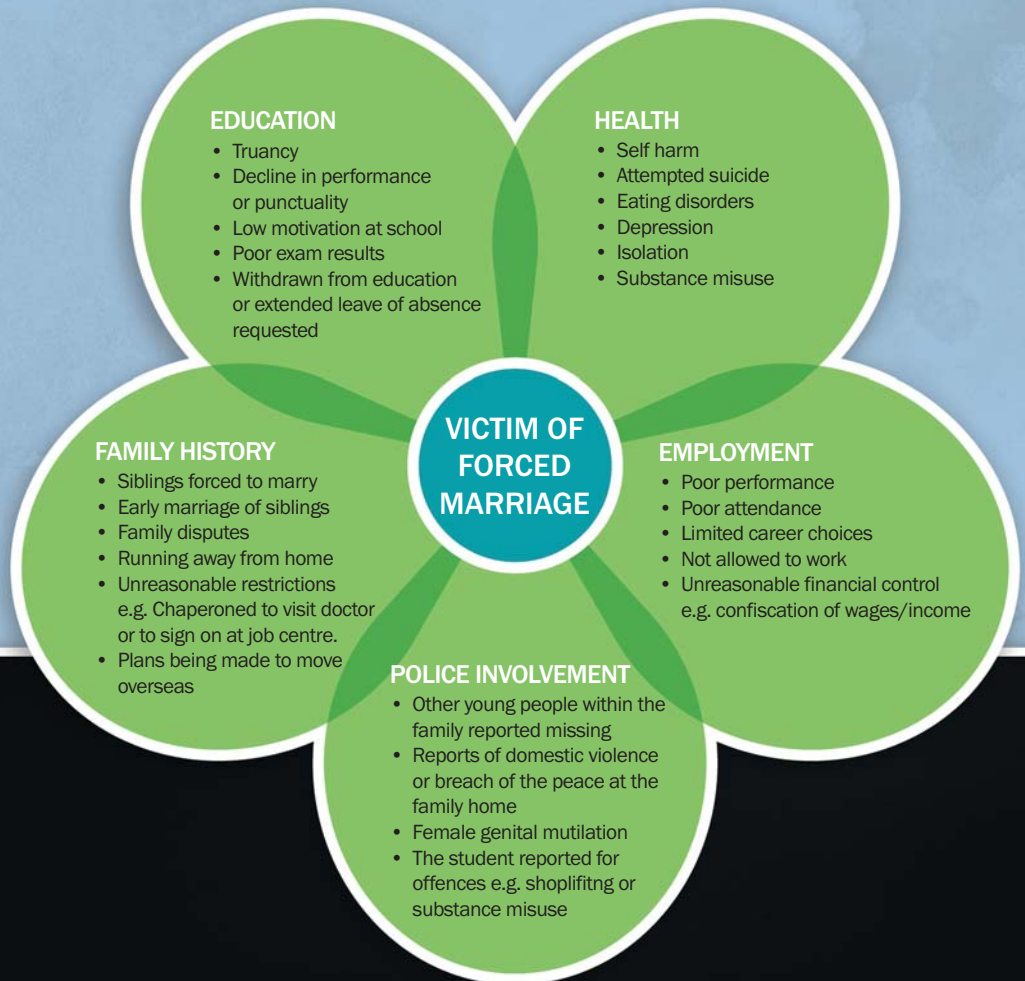
“ Forced marriage can never be justified.”



“ Please tell someone if you are worried about yourself or someone else.”

Spotting the signs

The majority of forced marriage victims are young people who are still at school or college. Teachers, school nurses, student welfare officers and friends have a key role in helping to spot the warning signs. Victims may not always disclose and ask for help. It is therefore important to look out for signs and ask questions.



What does Islam say about Forced Marriage?

The Quran explicitly says that men cannot inherit women against their will. This means that forced marriages are not allowed in Islam. Both the groom and the bride must consent to the marriage. The consent of the woman is essential, and must be obtained, and any marriage that is forced is considered to be batil or void.

Further evidence that forced marriage is against Islam can be found in hadith traditions based on reports of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh):

Example 1

Narrated Abdullah ibn Abbas: "A virgin came to the Prophet (pbuh) and mentioned that her father had married her against her will, so the Prophet (pbuh) allowed her to exercise her choice."

(Translation of Sunan Abu-Dawud, Marriage (Kitab Al-Nikah), Book 11, Number 2091)

Example 2

Khansa Bint Khidam said "My father married me to his nephew, and I did not like this match, so I complained to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). He said to me "accept what your father has arranged." I said "I do not wish to accept what my father has arranged." He said "then this marriage is invalid, go and marry whomever you wish." I said "I have accepted what my father has arranged, but I wanted women to know that fathers have no right in their daughter's matters (i.e. they have no right to force a marriage on them)."

(Fathul Bari Sharah Al Bukhari 9/194, Ibn Majah Kitabun Nikah 1/602)

“ Forced marriage cannot be justified on religious grounds in any faith. ”

Child Marriages

A minimum age for marriage is not stated in the Quran but it specifies that the person must be mature enough to have sound judgement (Quran 4:6). Unfortunately some scholars use onset of puberty as sufficient indication of maturity and therefore eligibility for marriage. They also use a particular hadith narration that says the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) married Aisha when she was only 9-years-old although it is considered unreliable and ignoring numerous other reliable hadiths that put her age at 19 years.

Children are clearly incapable of giving informed consent and are unable to take crucial decisions or negotiate the terms of a formal contract. There are scholars who acknowledge that intellectual maturity should be the basis for deciding age of marriage and not puberty and it is for this reason many Muslim-majority countries have adopted civil codes stipulating the minimum age of marriage is 18 years. Although Muslim marriages conducted in Britain are not legally recognised, the legal minimum age to enter into a marriage, whether it is a religious ceremony or a civil one, is 16 years providing it is not a forced marriage.

“ Forced marriage involving anyone under the age of 18 constitutes a form of child abuse. ”



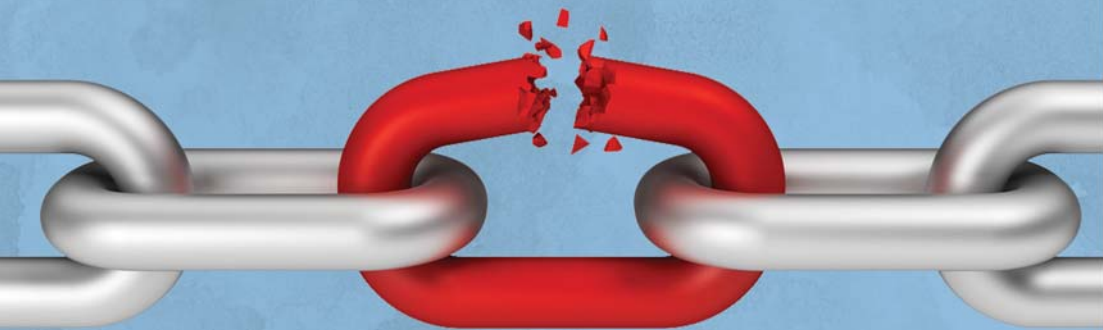
Maryam's Story

Maryam was still at school when she was taken abroad at the age of 15 during the summer holidays. She was forced to marry her cousin and not allowed to return to the UK until she was pregnant. Maryam's school did not report that she was no longer in education; they just accepted that Maryam had gone to stay abroad with family for a while.

Support Available

Those who are at risk of honour based violence or forced marriage or have been a victim of these issues can be helped and supported in the following ways:

- Can be put in safe accommodation such as a refuge
- Assisted in applying for financial support such as benefits.
- If taken abroad, can be rescued and brought back to the UK
- In situations of extreme danger from the family, the victim's identity can be changed such as changing the national insurance number and changing name by deed poll
- Can be supported to continue in education
- The Forced Marriage Unit and the Border Agency can prevent a spouse from abroad from entering the UK
- Given advice on dissolving the marriage e.g. annulment or divorce



DIVORCE

Young women who have undergone a forced marriage abroad and then leave this marriage after returning to the UK, usually focus on obtaining an Islamic divorce only. Many do not apply for a divorce under UK civil divorce law thinking it is not relevant or necessary. However, the UK law does recognise foreign marriages as legally valid provided they have been registered according to the laws of the particular country. So it is important to seek legal advice before getting married again e.g. conducting a civil marriage. If the previous marriage is not dissolved legally, a further marriage could amount to bigamy.

Where to get help

The following organisations can provide help, support and advice for anyone that is at risk of or has been subjected to honour based violence and forced marriage.

- **Report to the police** - by calling 101
- **Forced Marriage Unit** - 0207 008 0151
- **Call Crimestoppers anonymously** - 0800 555 111
- **Your Local Authority Children's Services or Adult Social Services**
- **Muslim Women's Network Helpline** - 0800 999 5786 / 0303 999 5786
www.mwnhelpline.co.uk
- **Amina Muslim Women's Helpline (Scotland)** - 0808 801 0301
- **Asha Forced Marriage** - 0208 696 0023
- **Freedom Charity** - 0845 607 0133
www.freedomcharity.org.uk
- **Halo Project (North East of England)** - 01642 683 045
www.haloproject.org.uk
- **Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organization** - 0207 920 6460
www.ikwro.org.uk
- **Karma Nirvana** - 800 5999 247
www.karmanirvana.org.uk
- **Jan Trust** - 0800 141 2994
www.againstforcedmarriages.org
- **Saheli Asian Womens Project** - 0161 945 4187
www.saheli.org.uk
- **Sharan** - 0844 504 3231
www.sharan.org.uk
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline** - 0808 200 0247



www.mwnhelpline.co.uk



Don't suffer in silence
Please tell someone



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