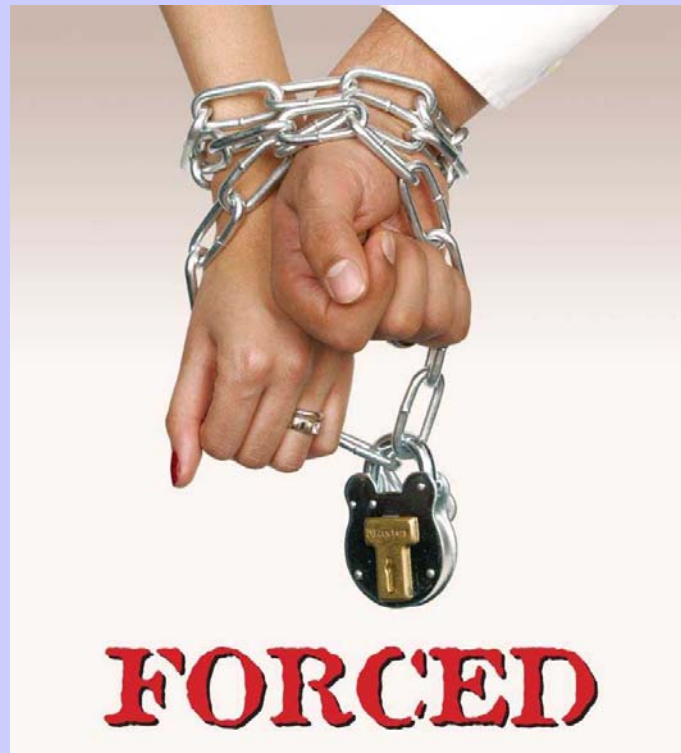


## The Forced Marriage Unit



**Forced marriage is domestic violence**

**Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights**

**“Multicultural sensitivity is no excuse for moral blindness.”**

(Mike O’Brien, Solicitor-General and former Home Office Minister)

## Who are we and what can we do to help?

- FCO offering consular assistance since 1999.
- 2000: Publication of “A Choice by Right”, the report of the working group on forced marriage
- 2005: Forced Marriage Unit established.
- FMU is now the Government’s one-stop shop for:
  - Researching and developing effective Government policy
  - Awareness raising
  - Casework
    - Reluctant Sponsors
    - Consular

## What is a Forced Marriage?

*“A marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties where duress (emotional pressure in addition to physical abuse) is a factor.”*

- [A Choice by Right](#) (June 2000)

## Why do forced marriages happen?

- Controlling unwanted behaviour and sexuality, particularly that of women, and preventing 'unsuitable' relationships
- Peer group or family pressure
- Protecting perceived cultural or religious ideals which can often be misguided
- Attempting to strengthen family links
- Family honour or long-standing family commitments
- Ensuring land remains within the family
- Assisting claims for residence and citizenship
- Providing a carer for a disabled family member / reducing the 'stigma' of disability

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### How big is the problem? Who is affected?

- A hidden problem which remains under-reported, but in the FMU we handle approximately 5,000 enquiries and around 400 cases per year
- Both young women and young men (who constitute 15% of the cases we deal with)
- Majority of individuals we deal with are aged 15-24, but 30% of our cases are minors, some as young as 10 years old
- Majority of cases from South Asia: Pakistan (65%), Bangladesh (25%)
- Some cases from other countries including Cyprus, Jordan, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Mali, Norway, Bosnia and Hong Kong

## Forced Marriage Casework - how can we help?

### How do we learn of a case?

- An individual contacts us in UK or at Post overseas fearing or fleeing a forced marriage
- A third party contacts us on behalf of an individual at risk
- An individual has already been forced into a marriage and wishes to prevent the spouse coming to the UK

### What do we do ... in the UK?

- Reassure confidentiality
- Work with Immigration Service to prevent entry clearance or have individuals removed from the UK
- Provide support, information and contacts (lawyers, social services, refuges, counsellors, voluntary organisations)
- Work with police, social workers, teachers, welfare officers, health professionals in UK to protect people at risk
- Arrange safe accommodation in UK
- Provide information on options and services after a forced marriage

## Forced Marriage Casework - how can we help?

### Overseas...

- Liaise with posts and NGOs overseas,
- Speak to individuals alone
- Help them to get to High Commission/Embassy
- Arrange safe accommodation overseas
- Organising repatriation - and rescues in extreme cases
- Organising emergency flights and travel documents with safe pick-up and transport from airport



## Why isn't Forced Marriage a Criminal Offence?

In 2005, the Government carried out a national consultation on whether or not to introduce a specific criminal offence for forced marriage.

- The majority of respondents felt that the disadvantages of new legislation outweighed the advantages.
- Many worried that criminalising forced marriage would force the issue underground.
- Victims of forced marriage are often unwilling to take action against their parents, and many respondents felt that the legislation would not be used.

The Government decided not to introduce specific legislation in June 2006.

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### Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

- Courts have power to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders.
- Breach of an injunction would not itself be a criminal offence, but would be a contempt of court. Courts would have the full range of sanctions available to them, including imprisonment.
- Enables people to apply for an injunction at the county courts, rather than just the high courts.
- Enables third parties to apply for an injunction on behalf of somebody else.
- Places FMU Guidelines on a statutory footing.
- Training and implementation will start from mid 2008.

## How Can I Help?

### Remind them that they have rights:

- Right only to enter into marriage with their full and free consent
- Right to make decisions about their life and their own bodies
- Right to education, freedom of movement, freedom of thought

### Remind them that they have choices:

- To go through with the marriage
- To avoid the marriage by fleeing their family
- To remain with the family and try to resolve the situation (this does not usually work and can place them in danger)
- To seek legal protection
- Refer to FMU and support agencies

## Forced Marriage Unit

- Do you need further information?
- Please contact:
- [Hannah.Buckley@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.Buckley@fco.gov.uk)
- 020 7008 8759
- [www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage)
- Leaflets and guidance available