



Say No  
to Forced  
Marriage

# Forced marriage can never be justified

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Forced marriage  
is against the law!

Carrying a prison sentence of up to  
7 years in England and Wales

This resource includes common reasons used to justify a forced marriage

.. and suggests counter-arguments to help you have those difficult conversations.



# 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.

# Are girls and women being buried alive today?

*Islam banned the pre-Islamic practice of burying infant girls alive.*

**(Quran 81:8-9)**

It can be argued that in today's society by not giving girls and women their rights, subjecting them to abuse including forced marriages and expecting them to suffer in silence, is equivalent to burying them alive!

Common reason used  
to justify forced marriage

# SHAME / HONOUR (IZZAT)

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*“Our family’s honour is at stake. You have to marry this person, otherwise it will bring shame upon us all.”*

## What to think about

In many cultures honour is used to:

- Control behaviour especially of girls and women
- Uphold status and reputation
- Enforce someone's will or way

Religion does not sanction, condone, or support such practices.

How do you feel that honour is more important to your family than your happiness?



Common reason used  
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# CULTURE AND TRADITION

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*“Our family has certain cultures and traditions that we must maintain. Parents decide who their children marry because they know best. We’ve always done it this way. We decided for your brothers and sisters.”*



## What to think about

Religion must take priority over culture and forced marriage is against Islam:

***“Ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor shall ye treat them with harshness...” (Quran 4:19)***

For Muslim marriages to be valid free and informed consent is required from both bride and groom which includes without emotional pressure.



Common reason used  
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# STATUS OF PARENTS

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*“Your religion teaches you to obey and respect your parents, especially mothers. For example, ‘**paradise lies beneath your mother’s feet.**’ Therefore, you have to agree to our choice of marriage partner.”*

## What to think about

In Islam parents should be treated with kindness and respected. However, this high status comes with responsibilities including to their children and they should not be telling you to do something that is against Islam such as forced marriage. Therefore, Allah commands you to speak out for justice, even against your family:

***“O you who believe, stand firmly for justice as witnesses for God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin and whether it be (against) rich or poor.”***

**(Quran 4:135)**

***“Whenever you speak justly, speak justly, even if it is against kin.”***

**(Quran 6:152)**

Common reason used  
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# MAINTAINING FAMILY TIES AND SECURING BRITISH CITIZENSHIP

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*“If you marry this person, they can come to the UK and become a British citizen which will help our extended family. It’s our duty to help them and maintain / strengthen family ties.”*

## What to think about

You are not a transaction that your happiness should be bartered in exchange for a British passport. Also how do you feel about your family placing more importance on family ties of extended family members, particularly those abroad, more than their ties to you, their immediate family? The well being of extended family is being given greater importance than your happiness.



Common reason used  
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# THREATS TO DISOWN

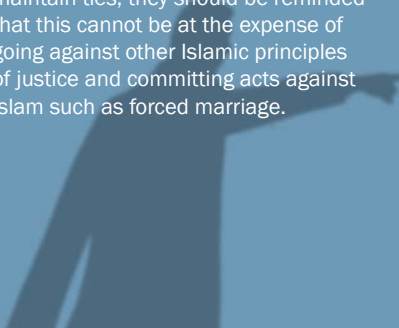
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*“If you don't agree to this marriage, we will disown you. You won't be able to see your brothers and sisters again, or anyone else. You will be all alone.”*

## What to think about

There are several hadiths that mention the importance of maintaining family relations and some even mention not to sever ties of kinship. Family members should be reminded of this.

If these hadiths are used to pressure you into marrying within the family to maintain ties, they should be reminded that this cannot be at the expense of going against other Islamic principles of justice and committing acts against Islam such as forced marriage.

A dark silhouette of a person in a long-sleeved garment, pointing their right arm towards the right side of the frame. The silhouette is positioned behind the text, with the hand pointing towards the end of the second paragraph.

Common reason used  
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# FINANCIAL GAIN

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*“If you marry your cousin then our money, property, and land abroad and here in the UK can remain in the family.”*

*“The person we have found for you to marry is wealthy and you will be better off and will be looked after.”*



## What to think about

You are not a transaction! A person's livelihood and sustenance (rizq) is from God and such actions, especially that counter the teachings of Islam will not necessarily result in retaining wealth.

*And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him..... Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.*

**(Quran 65:3)**

*And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision...*

**(Quran 11:6)**

Common reason used  
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# BRIBERY

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*“If you agree to this marriage you can have whatever you want; new car, house, money or even to go to university.”*

## What to think about

You are not a financial transaction or commodity but a person and should not be treated in this manner. Are you willing to sacrifice your happiness for material goods?

You should not have to be forced into marriage in exchange for your education, which is your right. You can be supported to continue with your education without parental support.



Common reason used  
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# SELF HARM / POOR HEALTH

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*“If you don't agree to this marriage you will give your father a heart attack, he is already unwell.”*

*“If you don't agree to this marriage I will kill myself and it will be on your head!”*

*“Your grandparents are elderly and they don't have long to live, it is their last wish for this marriage to happen.”*

## What to think about

You must think about your own physical and emotional health. Consequences of forced marriage can include: domestic violence, rape, depression / self-harm, loneliness and loss of job or education.

Given self-harm / suicide are generally against the principles of Islam, are the threats realistic?

You cannot be held responsible for actions of others as God in numerous verses says He has determined exact time of death:

***And it is not [possible] for one to die except by permission of Allah at a decree determined.***

**(Quran 3:145)**

Common reason used  
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# THREATS OF PARENTS DIVORCING

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*“If you don't do as you are told and marry this person, your father will divorce me.”*

*“If you refuse this marriage then you will ruin your sister's marriage as her husband will divorce her because it is his relative.”*

## What to think about

Your parents and other family members are adults and responsible for their own marriages. You cannot and should not take responsibility for their actions.



Common reason used  
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# CARING FOR ELDERLY PARENTS

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*“You need to marry someone from abroad to make sure your parents are looked after in their old age. Spouses from here in the UK won't do that!”*



## What to think about

Marrying spouses from abroad and / or from within the family does not guarantee care for your parents. It is your duty to care for your own parents anyway and should not be the responsibility of others.



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# PERMISSIBILITY OF POLYGAMY

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*“Just get married to this woman we have chosen for you and call her over to the UK. You can always taken on another wife later if you don't like her.”*

## What to think about

There are a number of interpretations about the permissibility of polygamy. Even when allowed, there are strict conditions of equality and justice for all wives. If they cannot be met, Allah commands marrying only one woman.

The long-term impact on wives and children is often very damaging, for which the man will be accountable.



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# SOLUTION TO HOMOSEXUALITY

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“You can't be really gay, it is just a phase. Once we marry you off you will change your mind; marriage will fix everything.”

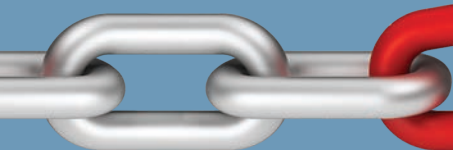
## What to think about

Marriage does not alter a person's sexual orientation. Marriage in such circumstances may result in harm to you (emotionally and / or physically) and also to the spouse. There is a principle in Islam that if one cannot fulfill spousal duties, they should not marry.

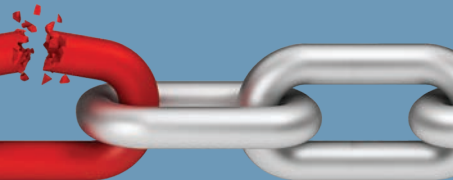


# Safety Advice

- 1.** Report concerns to a trusted person such as police, teacher or friend or contact a helpline.
- 2.** If at risk, do not travel abroad with family.
- 3.** Alert airport staff if you are being forced to leave the country, this could include placing small metal object such as a spoon in your underwear to set off scanners.



4. If you do travel abroad, then ensure you provide trusted person with:
- Passport details
  - Recent photograph
  - Current address including where you are travelling to
  - Other travel details such as flight number and dates of travel including expected return
  - Memorise contact details of Forced Marriage Unit and British Embassy in country of destination



# Where to get help



Forced Marriage Unit

**0207 008 0151**



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

