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British Muslim lawyers tackle forced marriage 'crisis'

LONDON: British Muslim lawyers have come up with an action plan to root out forced marriages in their community, in a report published on Thursday.

The Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT) believes British Muslims must take matters into their own hands to tackle the "crisis" of forced marriages between British citizens and spouses from South Asia.

In its report, "Liberation from Forced Marriages", the MAT claimed that more than 70 percent of marriages in the Muslim community involving a foreign spouse have some element of coercion or force.

The MAT has proposed a voluntary system whereby a British Muslim seeking to bring a foreign spouse into the country would provide testimony before a panel of Muslim judges. If they are satisfied that the marriage was not forced, the MAT judges would provide a written statement which the Briton could use to support the foreign spouse's application to settle in Britain.

"The initial idea is for the Muslim community to be able to deal with their own issues," a MAT spokesman said. "The judges at the tribunal are from the community: solicitors, barristers, professional English law judges. They know the intricacies of the community - and they know what to look for," he added. The MAT was established last year to help the Muslim community resolve disputes in accordance with the Islamic law - while within the English law - without having to resort to costly and time-consuming litigation. [afp](#)

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