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and Manchester, claims in its report that its proposals, set alongside the new act, mean that 'such hideous acts of forcing people to marry without their consent shall find no sanctuary within the English legal system.'

The figures were last night disputed by the Muslim Council of Britain. A spokesman for the council, Inayat Bunglawala, questioned where the seven-in-ten figure came from, and pointed me to the longer-established Islamic Sharia Council which offers advice and arbitration on marriage and divorce, although Inayat also asked me to make absolutely clear that the MCB and Sharia Council are bodies independent of each other. 'The allegation that 70 per cent of marriages involving a foreign born spouse has an element of force or coercion involved appears to be completely unsourced, he said. The MCB earlier this year published new guidelines condemning forced marriage as "unIslamic". The council has also warned against 'malicious' intervention by third parties into legitimate arranged marriages.



Update: Present at the launch was Meena Patel, of Southall Black Sisters. She and other Muslim women there applauded the attempt to address this critical issue, but were sceptical about the effect on a family of an imam turning up at the front door to discuss the legitimacy of a marriage. She helps many women on the run from arranged marriages, and also knows of a number where murder has been committed to prevent 'dishonour'.

(Note: picture credit to Kathrine Lassen's blog. It is from a play about a father who mistakenly kills his daughter when she objects to an arranged marriage.)

Technorati Tags: forced marriage, Islam, Muslim Council of Britain

Posted by Ruth Gledhill on June 12, 2008 at 12:01 AM in Islam, Marriage | Permalink

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Comments

[snip]

MCB's stance on forced marriages are found here

<http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/wrongnotright.pdf>

rg writes: thank you for this James, I also heard from Inayat and have amended the post accordingly, Ruth

Posted by: James Arberry | 12 Jun 2008 06:20:11

I attended a conference organised by South Asian Muslims in Bradford in the early 1990s, in which young women running away due to impending marriage was identified as a major community problem. It's tragic things have taken so long to come to a head, but its not only the South Asian community that has had its head buried in the sand with regards to this issue.

Posted by: Yunus | 12 Jun 2008 06:31:05

Following the action by the West Midlands Police (involving Channel 4)I believe there is now a question of a lack of enthusiasm to help girls in this distress. The schools in that area also seem to be reluctant to report obvious cases when children have gone missing and may be in danger of genital mutilation or enforced marriage or even murder. Many people are beginning begin to wonder if the West Midlands has become a State within a State where the Police have usurped the prerogatives of Parliament and where the writ of the UK Govt. no longer runs.

Posted by: Keith | 12 Jun 2008 14:41:44

Without the phrase "involving one Asian spouse", the headline of this piece is a statistic taken out of context so it appears far more shocking than the truth. That's not okay.

Posted by: Andrew Taylor | 14 Jun 2008 13:51:17