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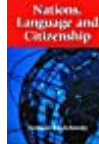
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The Iconoclast

**Thursday, 12 June 2008**

**Muslim legal group says forced marriages causing a crisis**

*From The Birmingham Post*

Britain's Muslim community is facing a "crisis" because hundreds of forced marriages go unreported and unnoticed, a legal group has said.

According to the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT), more than 70% of marriages in the Muslim community which involve a foreign spouse have some element of coercion or force.

In its Liberation From Forced Marriage report, the organisation also claims young Muslims in Britain are "under siege" from older generations and alienated from mosques.

The MAT claims that while there are currently 300 reported cases of forced marriages brought to the attention of the police and government authorities, the true figure is in the thousands.

The report says: "These figures reflect the crisis that has loomed within the Muslim community without being noticed or dealt with for the past two decades.

"The figures that are reported to the authorities are only the tip of the iceberg." According to the report, forced marriages are a reality for many young Muslims in the UK.

It adds: "Young Muslims in Britain are under siege from their elders and parents because of the generational and cultural gap. They are alienated from the mosques because these mosques are mainly controlled by the elder generation."

The report recommends that Muslim community leaders work alongside the Home Office and Foreign Office to resolve the issue.

Shaykh Faiz Siddiqi, chairman of the MAT's governing council, said it was crucial that the Muslim community worked alongside the Government. He said: "We will work closely with the Government. It has to be joined forces but up to now the leadership of the Muslim community have not been forthcoming."

The MAT was set up in 2007 and, according to its website, provides a "viable alternative for the Muslim community seeking to resolve disputes in accordance with Islamic Sacred Law and without having to resort to costly and time-consuming litigation".

*So even a Sharia Law organisation reckons that there is a problem.*

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