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## 12 UK Muslims Act on Forced Marriages

Jun Posted by Hisham



A group of British Muslim barristers and judges have come up with a proposal to help address the problem of forced marriage, a common practice seen as going against the very essence of Islam.

“Coerced and forced marriages are a reality for many young Muslims directly or indirectly,” the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT) said in a report on Thursday, June 12.

“Young Muslims in Britain are under siege from their elders and parents because of the generational and cultural gap.”

The “Liberation from Forced Marriages” report argues that more than 70 percent of marriages among British Muslims involving a foreign spouse have some element of coercion or force.

MAT is proposing a voluntary system under which a Muslim citizen seeking to bring a foreign spouse into Britain would voluntarily provide testimony before a panel of Muslim judges.

“The voluntary deposition, if successful would result in a written declaration from the Judges of MAT, that they were satisfied that the marriage entered into was without any force or coercion.”

The Muslim citizen can then use this declaration to support the application of the foreign spouse to settle in Britain.

“If however, the foreign spouse fails to produce such a declaration from MAT or any other appropriate evidence, then it would be open for the ECO at the entry clearance point, to draw such inferences deemed appropriate as to the status of the marriage.”

Britain is home to a multi-ethnic Muslim minority of more than two million, mainly from Pakistani, Bengali and Indian backgrounds.

Britain’s Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) says 65 percent of its cases involved Pakistani nationals and 25 percent involved Bangladeshi nationals.

Forced marriage is not outlawed in Britain, but rape, domestic violence and kidnap laws are used to prosecute instead.

### No Law Change

MAT, established last year to help British Muslims resolve disputes in accordance with Islamic Shari`ah while within English law, stressed the voluntary nature of its proposal.

“The British citizens are not forced to make themselves available to the MAT Judges,” it said.

It suggested that British Muslims can also show up in front of other Muslim judges or groups to do the same job.

“MAT need not be the only arbitration tribunal that the British citizen can refer the matter to. There will be people of other faiths and orientations that may find comfort in referring the matter to other tribunals.”

The Muslim group, whose Governing Council is chaired by Shaykh Faizul Aqtab Siddiqi, stressed there should be no interference on the part of British authorities into the issue.

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MAT said there should be no interference on the part of British authorities into the issue.

“One of the outstanding factors of this proposition is that there needs to be no changes made to the current immigration legislation,” it maintained.

“Any such attempts would be deemed by the community as infringement of their civil liberties of the community and / or the government placing further obstacles prejudicing the Asian community.”

Source: IslamOnline.net News



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