

My Future is My Choice

The Good News

Thousands of people around the world are taking action against the crimes of forced marriage, child marriage and honour-based violence, also known as honour-based abuse. These crimes are also happening in so-called 'developed' countries, such as the UK and the USA. Still today in nearly all states in the USA child marriage is legal.

Visit these links to learn about remarkable organisations, each working with people such as lawyers, survivors, relatives of former victims, politicians, police officers, educators and human rights activists.

www.ikrow.org, www.unchainedatlast.org, <https://karmanirvana.org.uk>

If the victim doesn't want to get married, why don't they just run away?

This question raises three important points.

1. The victim of forced or child marriage may have never heard of 'human rights'. The statement, 'You don't have the right to force me to get married,' may be completely unfamiliar to them.
2. Threats of physical or emotional harm are used to control the victim. 'If you don't do what we say, we will hurt, or even kill, someone in your family – or you.' Psychological threats are often based on social isolation. 'If you don't do this, we will never ever speak to you again. You are no longer part of our family. In our eyes you are dead.'
3. Sometimes, right up until the moment of the wedding ceremony, the victim will be under the physical control of other people. She or he may be locked in a room with no access to a mobile phone and not allowed to communicate with any friends.

Child marriage is the formal or informal marriage of a person 17 years old or younger. This can be a male child, but more commonly a female child.

Forced marriage is when one or both people involved does not agree to the marriage – they do not give their consent. In general, it is the immediate family of the bride who is forcing her to get married – often to a man she has never met or hardly knows.

Honour-based violence. Violence towards the victim and/or family members who are seen to have 'shamed' or 'dishonoured' the family name. This can include murder – even of a child by his/her parents. **There is nothing 'honourable' in this crime.**

No cultural, traditional or religious belief can justify these acts of violence.

The long-term consequences of child marriage can be: serious life-long medical problems (her young body is not ready for childbirth), physical, sexual or emotional abuse from the husband and/or his family, mental health problems due to loss of freedom and isolation from her own family, lack of education leading to extremely limited employment skills, depression resulting in self harm - at times, death.

To learn more about these crimes, download the document in this teaching unit called 'student autonomous learning resources'.