



FORCED MARRIAGE FACT SHEET

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO DECIDE WHETHER, WHEN, AND WHOM TO MARRY.

Q: WHAT IS FORCED MARRIAGE?

A: A marriage is forced if it takes place without the full and free consent of one or both parties. People of any gender, age, nationality, or background (ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, etc.) may be threatened with or experience a forced marriage.

Q: HOW IS FORCED MARRIAGE DIFFERENT FROM ARRANGED MARRIAGE?

A: In an arranged marriage, the ultimate choice of whether, when, and whom to marry remains with the individual, regardless of any matchmaking role played by family members. In a forced marriage, one or both parties feel powerless to make decisions due to pressure, threats, coercion, or abuse.

Q: IS FORCED MARRIAGE A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION?

A: Yes, a forced marriage is a violation of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.” Forced marriage situations often involve additional human rights violations, such as deprivation of education, rape, forced labor, and domestic violence, which can result in severe and long-term harm, including deteriorating medical and mental health.

Q: IS FORCED MARRIAGE A PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: Yes, forced marriage is a serious problem in the United States, impacting not only immigrant families but also multi-generational American families. Forced marriage is not confined to any religious or cultural groups.

Q: HOW PREVALENT IS FORCED MARRIAGE IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: No national estimates on the full extent of the problem have been calculated. However, according to a Tahirih Justice Center national survey on forced marriage, over 500 respondents in the United States encountered as many as 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage from 2009 to 2011. The survey gathered data from service providers, advocates, educators, law enforcement, and other professionals from 47 states. It additionally found that forced marriage affects individuals of many diverse backgrounds and faiths.

TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER FORCED MARRIAGE INITIATIVE

The Tahirih Justice Center Forced Marriage Initiative offers assistance to anyone who is fleeing a forced marriage regardless of age, race, class, gender, immigration status, nationality, sexual orientation, or religion. We partner with survivors and other advocates to end to forced marriage in the United States through direct services, education, outreach, and public policy advocacy.