



FORCED MARRIAGE

WHAT IS A FORCED MARRIAGE?

A marriage must be entered into with the full and free consent of both people. Everyone involved should feel that they have a choice.

An arranged marriage is not the same as a forced marriage. In an arranged marriage, the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner. The marriage is entered into freely by both people.

However, in some cases, one or both people are “forced” into a marriage that their families want. A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of both people, where pressure or abuse is used.

You might be put under both physical pressure (when someone threatens to or actually does hurt you), or emotional pressure (for example, when someone makes you feel like you’re bringing shame on your family) to get married.

In some cases people may be taken abroad without knowing that they are to be married. When they arrive in the country their passports may be taken by their family to try and stop them for returning home.

FORCED MARRIAGE is an abuse of human rights and a form of domestic violence and child abuse.

If you or someone you know is being forced into a marriage, help and advice is available.

WHAT TO DO.....

If you or someone you know is being forced into marriage either in the UK or abroad, you can contact the FORCED MARRIAGE UNIT (FMU).

The Forced Marriage Unit is there to help people who are being forced into marriage. The FMU’s caseworkers understand the issues, the family pressures and how difficult it is to talk about these situations.

The Forced Marriage Unit offers confidential support and information.

You have a right to choose.....and the Forced Marriage Unit is there to help you.

YOU CAN:

Call (+44) (0)20 7008 0151 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday

Emergency Duty Officer (out of office hours) (+44) (0)20 7008 1500

Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk



Find out more about the work of the Forced Marriage Unit at:
www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens when you call the FMU helpline?

You will talk to an experienced caseworker who will listen and offer you confidential support and information. You can discuss your options with them. We can give you information on your rights and the services available to support you. **WE WILL NOT CONTACT YOUR FAMILY.**

I can't afford to leave home. So, how is being homeless with no money a better life than a forced marriage?

If you are a woman, you can go to a refuge. A refuge is a safe environment which can provide you with emotional and practical help such as access to counselling, and sorting out benefits and housing.

You will be encouraged to become independent and to make your own decisions about your future. If you are male, call us to discuss your options.


How can you guarantee my safety?

While we cannot guarantee safety, we can put you in contact with agencies whose job it is to help protect you. You should always call the police if you are in immediate danger. Refuges can provide you with somewhere safe to stay if you choose to leave home.

If I think I might be forced into a marriage when I go abroad, what should I do?

Think very carefully before you decide to go abroad. Once you are abroad, it will be much harder to get help. **If you decide to go, please contact us at the FMU and give us the following information:-**

- Name and date of birth as shown on passport
- Passport number (with the date and place of issue)
- Overseas contact details and address of where you will/they will be staying and other relatives you/they may be visiting when abroad
- Address and telephone number (including mobile phone number in the UK)
- A recent photograph
- Contact details of someone you trust in the UK
- Parent's names
- Departure and expected return dates
- Who you/they are travelling with, and you/their family members staying in the UK



If you are going abroad make sure you keep this information with you and also send a copy of it to us at the FMU.

What happens if I am abroad and realise that I am being forced into a marriage?

You or a trusted friend should contact the nearest British Consulate, Embassy or High Commission. They will contact the FMU in the UK and arrange for assistance.

What happens if I am abroad and manage to run away, but I don't have enough money to fly home?

If you haven't got the money, and you can't borrow it from a friend or relative, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office may in some circumstances be able to loan you the money for a ticket. But you will have to pay this back when you get home.

How long will it take before I can come back to the UK and where will I stay while arrangements are being made?

We will try to make arrangements for you to come back as soon as possible. However, if you do have to stay abroad for any length of time, we will try to find you a suitable place to stay.

If I am abroad, what will happen if I don't have my passport?

Provided you are a British national, we can issue you with an emergency passport.

I got married overseas. Is my marriage valid in the UK?

If your marriage is seen as valid in the country where it took place, in many cases it will be valid in the UK. You must talk to a solicitor, whether you had a religious or civil marriage. Religious divorce is not valid in the UK.

Can you still help me if I am under 16?

Yes we can. Please call the FMU to discuss these options.

For further information please contact:

**The Forced Marriage Unit
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Tel: 020 7008 0151
Email: fm@fco.gov.uk
Website: www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage**