

## BACKGROUND: “HONOUR-BASED CRIMES” & FORCED MARRIAGES

“**Honour Based Crimes**” have been defined as crimes committed by family members against women and girls in an attempt to “save the family honour.” As explained in relation to the Shafia trial in Kingston involving a Montreal family, Shahrzad Mojab, an expert in “honour killing”, informed the Shafia jury that in “...traditional, patriarchal families, the chastity, virginity and obedience of girls and women are vital to the maintenance of family honour. If a woman dresses immodestly or consorts with other men, or is believed to have done those things, she may be perceived to have shamed the patriarch and may be marked for death”. <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/01/24/page/2/>

The reality we as a society must face is that these murders are about gendered violence. They symbolize a wider, more prevalent logic that shows women and girls what is likely to happen to them if they don't behave and conform to social and patriarchal expectations. ...It is a notion that women are property: if they do not conform, they are likely to suffer the consequences. Femicide is about gender. It is about women and girls being killed because they are women and girls. (Yasmin Jiwani & Homa Hoodfar, Montreal Gazette, January 31, 2012) <http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/Should+call+honour+killing/6075589/story.html#ixz11FZ1BQPm>

The South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) defines a **forced marriage** as a marriage without consent, where pressure or abuse is used to coerce one or both persons to marry. The abuse could be emotional, mental or physical using threats, isolation, guilt or taken overseas to marry. “A marriage that is forced is a form of violence and an abuse of human rights. It is against the law in Canada to force someone to get married.” <http://www.forcedmarriages.ca/>

Forced marriages are difficult to report and respond to as the perpetrators or those committing this act of abuse are members of the immediate and extended family; including parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins of the person involved.

“**Arranged marriages** have been a long-standing tradition in many cultures and countries. The Department respects this tradition, and makes a very clear distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether to accept the arrangement remains with the individuals”. (The U.S. Department of State); Debjani Roy, Manavi Occasional Paper No. 9: An Introduction to Forced Marriage in the South Asian Community in the United States (2011); <http://www.manavi.org/publications.php>

For more information please refer to:

June Jordan – from Symington, A. 2004. “Intersectionality: A tool for gender and economic justice.” Facts & Issues 9 (August). Toronto: The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). [www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org).

<http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/01/24/page/2/>

<http://www.ottawasun.com/2012/01/26/honour-killings-on-the-rise-in-canada-study>