



(Formerly Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation – KRWO)

## Press Releases

### **Forced Marriage should be criminalise as much as trafficking and other sexual exploitation of women and young girls**

Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women Organisation (KMEWO) provides free, confidential and non-judgmental advice and support services to women victims/survivors of violence and Traditional Harmful Practices including Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage and FGM .

KMEWO fully support the principles of zero tolerance to any kind of violence towards women and children and accepts no justification for such violence under the pretext of; upholding traditional practices, culture or religion. We believe that all types of violence are human right's abuses and should be treated as criminal offences.

This paper is KMEWO's collective response to The Home Office's Consultation paper on Forced Marriages, published in 2011. The government is considering whether to make [forcing someone to marry against his/her will a criminal offence](#) . KMEWO supports criminalization of forced marriages, because it will send an uncompromising message to potential perpetrators and will give victims the confidence to resist any attempt by their families to arrange a marriage on their behalf against their freely expressed will. Furthermore we believe that criminalization of FM will only be affective if it is accompanied by having measures in place to support victims / applicants throughout the process, for example, by ensuring their safety, protecting them from threats from extended families, providing essential, practical and emotional support, safe accommodation and financial support.

KMEWO believes that the Government has a duty to fully protect it is citizens from abuse and exploitation and that forced marriage should be made unacceptable as much as trafficking and other sexual exploitation of women and young girls, the only difference in the same way as trafficking and sexual exploitation. The only difference is that forced marriages are usually initiated by family members, whilst the other are often perpetrated by strangers and/or organised gangs. These are however both criminal acts and should be treated as such. KMEWO believe that FM is a form of human right's abuse, which is also child abuse when the victim is a minor. By criminalising this act a clear message will be sent out to potential perpetrators and the communities that forcing someone to marry another person is wrong and that such behaviour will not be tolerated in a civilised society.



We further believe that in making forced a marriage a criminal offence the young person will be empowered to resist such arrangement and refused to go along with it, knowing that they have the protection of the law and that their safety is protected. We fully appreciate the difficulty a young person will have in standing to their parents and close family members and to report them to police knowing that they could face imprisonment. But this will be a lot easier than the existing situation where the young person may be required to seek civil protection, in the first instance, and secondly to report any subsequent breach of the protection order. In any case the existing law is not effective.

We fully agree with this section of the Home Office consultation paper, which reads; “Our first duty must always be to protect those at risk of forced marriage. Creating a specific offence of forced marriage could not only act as a deterrent to families who might otherwise resort to this form of abuse, but it could also give victims a stronger sense that what is happening to them is wrong because it is something that is against the law. This could make it easier for victims to challenge their parents and wider family”.

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KMEWO

