



Human Trafficking Committee

Preventing forced marriages

Introduction

Forced marriages, especially early ones, deprive women and young girls of their basic human rights. Forced marriages are defined as marriages arranged without free consent of one or both parties. Mostly, victims of forced marriages are females, or children and mentally disabled individuals that are virtually incapable of informed consent. However, there are cases of young men and boys being forced to marry as well.

There are many problems with implementing and enforcing laws and regulations on forced marriages. The aim of the Human Trafficking Committee is to find a solution and make the majority of members sign a legal document controlling this issue.

Forced marriages regulations

Forced and early marriages are globally recognized as violations of basic human rights. There are numerous regulations and international treaties condemning forced marriages.

Universally, these documents demand informed and official consents of both parties and minimum age of both the bride and the groom. However, the laws are extremely hard to enforce because

- Individuals are often forced to give an official consent by their family or environment
- Individuals are not informed enough
- Bribery functions often in case of child marriages
- Child marriages do not often happen in the official way and are only conducted in the traditional sense, thus they are not registered Among the most important international documents trying to regulate forced and child marriages, there are
- The Convention on Consent to Marriage
- Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- United Nation´s Recommendation on Consent to Marriage All these documents have been signed by a majority of the United Nations members, however the forced marriages issue remains very severe and the statistics do not show any major positive development.

Forced marriages statistics problems

Statistics about forced marriages differ greatly, as they are of course unofficial and undocumented. It is estimated that 48% of individuals compelled to marry without a sound consent are youngsters and adolescents or even children.

Child marriages

In 2003, the International Centre for Research on Women claimed that more than 51 million young females under 18 years were already married over the world and the figure was estimated to rise to 100 million over the next 10 years.

UNICEF has done a wide research on child forced marriages in most Third World regions in the world. It has estimated percentages of young females aged 15 to 24 married before the age of 18 or 15.

Sample statistics

South Asia = 48% under age of 18
 Bangladesh = 27.3% under age of 15 and 65.3% under age of 18

Africa = 42% under age of 18
 Niger = 27.3% under age of 15 and 76.6% under age of 18
 Ethiopia = 69% under age of 18

Consequences of forced marriages

The most significant consequence of forced marriage is gender inequality, as girls and women are thus perceived as commodities for trade and individuals unable and unauthorized to make their own decisions.

Secondly, forced marriages usually end in sexual, physical or psychological domestic abuse and excessive control of the woman. This is especially true for child marriages which often result in domestic rapes.

Thirdly, early marriage discourages the children and youngsters from studying and, therefore, the illiteracy rate rises and especially females do not pursue higher education. UNICEF has published that women married before the age of 18 have 16% less chance of being primarily educated than women married after they are adult. Education may however serve as a preventative factor as well. UNICEF stated that for example in Senegal, 36% of women without primary education married before reaching adulthood compared with 18% of women with primary education married before the age of 18.

Fourthly, child and forced marriages cause psychosocial disadvantages of the victims in later life, such as isolation or being widowed at a very low age (which brings about other social problems and limitations for the widow).

Fifthly, child marriages result in early child-bearing and family planning which brings about both health problems as the bodies of young females are not yet fully prepared for maternity (moreover when combined with bad healthcare) and early responsibilities which are not yet manageable by adolescent-mothers.

Lastly, forced and child marriages have an undeniable psychological impact on the victims as they feel abandoned, depressed and insecure in their matrimony. They are not prepared to leave their family and care for a household of some complete stranger.

Conclusion

Overall, forced marriages represent one of the most serious human rights violations in today's world. The statistics are very hard to estimate accurately as the majority of forced marriages happen unofficially and they keep being unregistered.

There have been already many treaties and international accords about regulations of this issues, however the statistics suggest that their effect is mostly negligible. The aim of the Human Trafficking

Committee is to try to find a practical and effective solution of the issue and most importantly ways to control the enforcement of the regulations.

Further research

Research your state's statistics about

- Percentage of forced and child marriages
- Average age of both the brides and the grooms
- The development of these statistics throughout the last decades and prognosis to the future
- The literacy rate and education of both women and men and how is this statistic connected with the forced marriages issue – Research
- Your state's attitude towards the problem
- Official international treaties your state has signed in the past condemning forced and child marriages – Suggest

Minimum age for marriages

How the laws in international treaties should be enforced and controlled

Possible solutions to already married children or formerly forced brides and grooms

Sources and links:

- [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2009/Expert Paper EG MGPLHP_Cheryl Thomas revised_.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2009/Expert_Paper_EG_MGPLHP_Cheryl_Thomas_revised_.pdf)
- <https://globaljusticeinitiative.wordpress.com/forced-marriage-2/library-2/>
- [http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/UN report final.pdf](http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/UN_report_final.pdf)
- http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html
- [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child Marriage Report 7 17 LR.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR.pdf)
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- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/w4r-burkina-faso-forced-marriage/>