

# From Quebec to France: forced marriages still exist

February 2 2010

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Sakina (fictitious name) was born in Bangladesh yet raised in Montreal. At 16, she returned to her homeland with her parents under the pretext of visiting her sick grandmother. The young woman was then forced to marry a man twice her age - despite her resistance.

The girl later wrote to her mother that she was kept in a locked room, where she was beaten and raped. After two months, her mother granted her return to [Montreal](#). By 19, Sakina was forced to marry again. According Madeline Lamboley, a PhD student from the Université de Montréal School of Criminology, this true story mirrors the fate an unconfirmed number of female immigrants in Quebec, France and the U.K.

Lamboley stresses, however, the difference between arranged marriages and forced marriages. "In an arranged marriage, [parents](#) present different candidates to the young woman who must then chose," says Lamboley. "In a forced marriage, there is no negotiation. The husband is imposed and she has no choice. If she refuses, she could be disowned by her family and shun from her community."

The practice of forced marriages is common in many countries, says Lamboley, including [Bangladesh](#) and India. It's also widespread in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. According to Lamboley, the practice even exists in Italy, Portugal and among French aristocrats.

There are many reasons for such a marriage. The most common is to help a stranger obtain citizenship. Sometimes, a family living abroad is indebted to another clan back home and must share the financial resources they have obtained in their adopted country. "A French or Canadian girl is worth a lot on the market seeing as she provides access to a sought-after citizenship," says Lamboley.

How many forced marriages have occurred France and Quebec? "It's very hard to say," responds Lamboley. "There is no official data on the issue. The marriages occur abroad and are rarely reported. The victims are hard to reach and they struggle to discuss such a taboo subject."

Lamboley, whose research is financed by the School of Criminology and the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes, hopes her thesis may shed light on an important women's rights issue. Next, she plans to conduct a comparative study of France and Quebec; her goal is to interview 15 victims of forced marriage in each region.

Provided by University of Montreal

Citation: From Quebec to France: forced marriages still exist (2010, February 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-02-quebec-france-marriages.html>

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