

Makkah Masjid مكة مسجد

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Management: Leeds Muslim Council

PRESS RELEASE

BBC Panorama: Shariah Councils dealing with Domestic Abuse

On Monday 22 April BBC Panorama showed that British Shariah Councils may be putting Muslim women "at risk" by pressuring them to stay in abusive marriages.

Shariah Councils are voluntary bodies that offer alternative dispute resolution and mediation to a husband and wife and provide welcome assistance to enable parties to reach an agreement in delicate and culturally sensitive areas. They afford critical support to vulnerable women and help dissolve their marriages.

Imam of Makkah Masjid, Qari Asim MBE said: " As a lawyer, I am aware that arbitration offered by Shariah Councils serves a very useful purpose in dispute resolutions. Many Muslim women, as well as men, voluntarily choose to use religious forums as a means of addressing and resolving their conflicts. It must be remembered that judgements passed by Shariah Councils are non-binding and subject to English law at all times.

Where there is evidence of abuse, coercion, and in some cases violence, mediators must recognise that they are under a legal, moral and religious duty to absolutely make sure that a person's safety is never compromised."

No cultural consideration or sensitivity should stop anyone applying the law of the country and upholding the teachings of Islam, which profoundly preserve the rights of women. Any form of domestic violence is unacceptable and not endorsed by Islamic faith. Makkah Masjid in partnership with NHS has produced 'Domestic abuse – a guide for Muslim communities' to raise awareness of this abhorrent crime and help people to respond appropriately to situations involving domestic abuse. This guide has not been produced because Muslim women are more likely to be subjected to domestic violence but because Islam strongly condemns domestic violence.

BBC Panorama has highlighted deficiencies in the quality of mediation offered to some women by a small number of Shariah Councils. "Where there are malpractices, they need to be addressed immediately. Abolishing Shariah Councils is not the answer as it will deprive British Muslims of an essential and effective alternative dispute resolution and mediation service." said Qari Asim

British Muslim communities must work together to have a system of self-regulating Shariah Councils with all their processes and procedures transparent, fair and in compliance with the relevant British laws. A community led self-governance and self-regulation system which applies the valuable benchmarks and processes already developed in this area shall improve the alternative dispute resolution and arbitration services offered by the Shariah Councils.

For more information contact us on 07816 667 282 or mail@makkahmasjid.co.uk.