

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

29 September 2009

PAK103265.E

Pakistan: The situation of men who refuse to participate in arranged marriages set up by their parents
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on the situation of men who refuse to participate in arranged marriages set up by their parents was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, in a 23 February 2007 article on forced and arranged marriages, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) describes the situation of a man living in Britain who, when he was 17 years old, was taken to Pakistan with his family for a supposed holiday. Upon arrival in Pakistan, the 17-year old man discovered he was to marry his cousin to whom he had been engaged since he was 8 years old (BBC 23 Feb. 2007). The article states that "[w]hen he refused [to marry her], he was drugged, then put in shackles and imprisoned in the local mosque 'to learn respect for Islamic tradition'" (ibid.).

Additional information to that found in PAK42602.E of 28 April 2004, which is provided below, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), an independent non-governmental organization, a generalization concerning the situation of males, particularly Pashtun males, in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) who refuse to participate in an arranged marriage, is almost impossible to make and each case should be examined individually (15 Apr. 2004). The HRCP's position is the same on the issue of whether the bride-to-be could marry someone else if such an engagement is terminated—each case should be examined individually (HRCP 15 Apr. 2004). In the opinion of the Joint Director, in each case, the situation of the groom-to-be and the bride-to-be, their family, the circumstances and whether they live in a rural or urban area of the province would need to be examined (ibid.).

Speaking generally and without reference to the Pashtun community, the Joint Director indicated that a man who refused to accept an arranged marriage would be placed under great pressure socially and from his family and might have his family ties severed (ibid.). More serious consequences are unusual but would depend on the individual circumstances (ibid.). The Joint Director added that a woman whose intended husband refused the marriage could legally and morally pursue marriage with someone else, but might suffer considerable social stigma ... which is generally embarrassing for the young woman, and is in some cases [is interpreted as a sign] that the groom-to-be and his family were not satisfied with her moral character/personal traits etc. In such circumstances, it may be somewhat difficult for her to find a suitable match (ibid.).

The Joint Director stated that the above would also apply to those who belong to the Pashtun community, and added that Pashtuns, an ethnic community generally located in the NWFP, are extremely conservative and possess firm social rules (ibid. 21 Apr. 2004). In light of this,

[a] Pashtun male rejecting an arranged marriage is thus likely to face a degree of greater family/social pressure than his counterpart in the Punjab. Similarly, a Pashtun bride may find it some degrees harder to find a suitable match after a broken arrangement (HRCP 21 Apr. 2004).

The Joint Director emphasized that these are "broad generalizations" and such cases should be assessed individually (ibid.).

Corroborating information on the situation of males, particularly Pashtun males, in North West Frontier Province who refuse to participate in an arranged marriage that is set up by his and the bride's families, including whether the bride-to-be could marry someone else if such an engagement is terminated, could not be found among

the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). 23 February 2007. "Forced Marriage." <http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/eastmidlands/series11/week7_forced_marriage.shtml> [Accessed 15 Sept. 2009]

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). 21 April 2004. Correspondence from the Joint Director.

_____. 15 April 2004. Correspondence from the Joint Director.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: In the process of updating PAK42602 of 28 April 2004, attempts to reach a Boston University professor of anthropology with expertise in Pakistan, a professor of law at the International Islamic University Malaysia, a gender specialist at the University of Denver and representatives from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Karma Nirvana were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International ([AI](#)), Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *Dawn* [Karachi], *Daily Times* [Lahore], Dialog/WNC, European Country of Origin Information Network ([ecoi.net](#)), La fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), Freedom House, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Integrated Regional Information Networks ([IRIN](#)), *Middle East Times*, *The Nation* [Lahore], Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), Refworld, South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (SAHRDC), United States ([US](#)) Department of State.

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