



Honor Violence Fact Sheet

WHAT IS HONOR VIOLENCE? Honor violence is a form of violence against women committed with the motive of protecting or regaining the honor of the perpetrator, family, or community. Victims of honor violence are targeted because their actual or perceived behavior is deemed to be shameful or to violate cultural or religious norms. Conduct such as resisting an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce, adopting a Western lifestyle and wearing Western clothing, and having friends of the opposite sex have resulted in honor violence.

Honor violence involves systematic control of the victim that escalates over a period of time and may begin at a young age. Honor violence can be perpetrated by one individual or can be a group campaign of harassment and violence committed by an entire family or community. It can take many forms, including verbal/emotional abuse, threats, stalking, harassment, false imprisonment, physical violence, sexual abuse, and homicide.

HOW IS HONOR VIOLENCE DIFFERENT FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE? Although honor violence involves violence by one family member against another, it has characteristics that make it unique and warrant a different approach by social service providers and law enforcement. For example, a perpetrator of honor violence believes that his conduct is justified because of the victim's actions. Because this perception is supported by deeply ingrained cultural mores, he is generally not alone in this belief and often has the support of his family and community, either in planning and committing the violence or fleeing from law enforcement afterwards. Additionally, a victim of honor violence is likely to be shunned by her family and community because she is believed to have caused the violence through her own behavior. For a victim of honor violence to leave the abusive situation, she must not only part from her abuser, but often must be ready to leave her entire nuclear and extended family, and perhaps even her cultural community. She will face immense pressure to change the offending behavior so as to bring peace to the family and restore the family's honor and will be made to believe that she deserves the abuse she is suffering.

DOES THIS HAPPEN IN THE UNITED STATES? Yes. There are numerous recent examples of honor violence in the U.S., a few of which are described below.

Aiya Altameemi. In Arizona in February 2012, 19-year-old Aiya Altameemi was physically assaulted by her mother, father, and younger sister because she was seen talking to a boy. Her father put a knife to her throat and threatened to kill her, while her mother and sister tied her to a bed, taped her mouth shut, and beat her. This incident followed a previous incident in November 2011 when Aiya's mother burned her on the face with a hot spoon because she refused to consent to an arranged marriage with a man twice her age. During an interview with police, Aiya's parents stated that they had abused their daughter because her behavior violated "Iraqi culture." Aiya's mother, father, and sister are all facing charges related to these incidents.

Sarah and Amina Said. In Texas in January 2008, Yaser Said shot and killed his teenage daughters, Sarah and Amina, because he was enraged by their Western lifestyle, particularly that they each had boyfriends. During a vigil held for the girls after their deaths, their brother took the microphone and suggested that his sisters were responsible for what had happened to them, saying "They pulled the trigger, not my dad." Said fled after the murders and has not yet been apprehended.

Noor Almaleki. In Arizona in October 2009, Faleh Almaleki murdered his 20-year-old daughter, Noor, by running her down with his vehicle because he believed that she had shamed the family by becoming too Western and refusing to marry a man he had selected for her in Iraq. In February 2011, Almaleki was convicted of murder and sentenced to 34 1/2 years in prison.

THE AHA FOUNDATION HAS SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATED FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ADDRESS HONOR VIOLENCE. In February 2012, the AHA Foundation provided draft language and a letter of support to Representative Frank Wolf for the Appropriations Bill that would compel the U.S. government to begin tracking honor violence. Once the bill was passed, the Department of Justice (DOJ) was required to begin collecting data on honor violence. As a result, in 2013, the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill directed the DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women and the National Institute of Justice to determine the prevalence of honor violence and recommend best practices for law enforcement and service providers for prevention. A research firm was commissioned by the DOJ to write a report on the prevalence of honor violence in the U.S.; while the research was conducted, the AHA Foundation was frequently consulted and heavily cited in the resulting report, which shared that a critical next step in addressing honor violence in the U.S. is the training law enforcement and frontline service providers. The AHA Foundation has trained more than 2,500 professionals on how to conduct investigations, identify cases and protect victims of honor violence.