

# Honor Violence **FACT SHEET**

## **WHAT IS HONOR VIOLENCE?**

Honor violence is a form of violence, typically committed against women, with the motive of protecting or regaining the honor of the perpetrator, family, or community. Honor violence is perpetuated by the belief in some cultures that the honor of the entire family rests on compliance with family and cultural norms, such as the sexual fidelity or virginity of its female members.

Honor violence involves systematic control of a victim that tends to escalate over a period of time. It can be perpetrated by an individual but is more likely to be committed by an entire family or community. Honor violence takes many forms including psychological abuse, threats, stalking, harassment, false imprisonment, violence, sexual abuse, and homicide.

## **WHAT IS AN HONOR KILLING?**

Honor killings are murders committed when an individual – typically a female – is thought to have shamed the family, and killing that individual is believed to be the only way the alleged shame can be erased and honor restored to the family.

United Nations Population Fund  
estimates that approximately

**5,000 WOMEN AND GIRLS**  
**ARE VICTIMS OF HONOR KILLINGS GLOBALLY EACH YEAR**

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HONOR VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

Although there is significant overlap, honor violence differs from domestic violence because honor violence is often condoned by families and communities. A perpetrator of honor violence often 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.

## **DOES THIS HAPPEN IN THE UNITED STATES?**

Honor violence is commonly seen as foreign issue, but it does occur in the United States. Global data from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that approximately 5,000 women and girls are victims of honor killings each year; however, thousands of people are at risk in our country and there is little awareness about the practices and how to prevent them. The vast majority of honor violence crimes are undetected and underreported.

## **WHO IS MOST AT RISK OF HONOR VIOLENCE?**

While honor violence is not limited to any group, the most common survivors and victims of honor violence are women and girls. That being said, honor violence can also happen to men and boys.

## **WHAT MIGHT MOTIVATE AN HONOR KILLING?**

Victims are targeted because their actual or perceived behavior is deemed shameful or a violation of cultural or religious norms. Behaviors that motivate honor violence include resisting an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce, adopting a Western lifestyle, and having friends of the opposite sex.

### **CASE STUDY:** **IRSAN MURDERS**

In Texas, in 2012, an ongoing campaign of honor violence against Nesreen Beavers culminated in the shooting and death of her husband, Coty Beavers, and close friend, Gelareh Bagherzadeh. Nesreen's father, Ali Irsan, carried out the murders as an act of retribution for the purported Western influences that the victims had on his daughter. Ali was convicted of capital murder in August 2018 and now faces the death penalty.

### **CASE STUDY:** **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 34½ years in prison.