



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2019-0102, 1 May 2019

# Sharia law courts in the UK

By David Torrance

## Summary

General debate on Sharia law courts in the UK initiated by John Howell MP. The debate will take place in Westminster Hall on Thursday 2 May at 3pm.

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# 1. Background

Sharia councils – also known as Sharia courts – have existed in the UK since the early 1980s.<sup>1</sup> The [Islamic Sharia Council](#) (ISC) based in Leyton, East London, was established in 1982.

Its website states that it was formed to “solve the matrimonial problems of Muslims living in the United Kingdom in the light of Islamic family law”, for example marriages, divorce and inheritance issues. The ISC is a Registered Charity<sup>2</sup> and not a formal court of law, and therefore only deals with the Islamic Nikah marriage ceremony rather than civil marriage contracts.

The ISC lists its broader Objectives as to be of assistance to Muslims in the UK by:

- fostering and encouraging the practice of the Muslim faith according to the Quran and the Sunnah;
- providing Advice and assistance in the operation of Muslim family life;
- establishing a bench of scholars to operate as the Islamic Sharia Council and to make decisions on matters of Muslim family law referred to it;
- promoting an enlightened practice of the Islamic faith by Muslims living in the UK;
- to educate the public generally regarding Islam and to dispel negative stereotypes.<sup>3</sup>

Sharia councils have no official legal or constitutional role in the UK. Their work consists primarily of adjudicating on religious divorces, usually at the request of women. They may also give verdicts on other aspects of day-to-day life, for example on Sharia-compliant finance or on halal food.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1 Muslim Arbitration Tribunal

The [Muslim Arbitration Tribunal](#) (MAT) was established in 2007 to provide, according to its website, “a viable alternative for the Muslim community seeking to resolve disputes in accordance with Islamic Sacred Law”.

MAT claims to operate under the remit of the [Arbitration Act 1996](#), acting, again according to its website, as:

an effective, efficient and unique Alternate Dispute Resolution organisation which deals with Islamic Sacred Law within the context of the English Legal System.

The MAT website further argues that members of the Muslim community had been “forced to resort to unregulated Shariah Councils and the local Imams to provide resolutions to their problems”, meaning that any

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Sharia courts” is often used in the media but it is not usually used by the organisations themselves. “Sharia council” is the more common term used by the organisations, and by academics who specialise in religion and the law.

<sup>2</sup> Registered Charity No: 1003855

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.islamic-sharia.org/aboutus/>

<sup>4</sup> Nazia Rashid, [Written evidence submitted by Nazia Rashid](#), para. 10.

“decision reached would of course have no backing of the law and often raised more questions than answers”.

The 1996 Act provides for religious bodies, such as Sharia councils, to act as mechanisms for dispute resolution, provided that all parties have consented to the process. Critics of Sharia councils are sceptical that such consent is possible in religiously conservative communities where women might be intimidated into going to a Sharia council. However, the *Arbitration Act 1996* does contain safeguards that ensure civil courts will not enforce arbitration agreements that have been made under duress or that are not in line with the principles of UK law.

There is debate over whether the Act should be used to arbitrate family disputes. The Act itself does not explicitly rule out its application to these but Governments have taken different positions on the matter. In [November 2008](#), Jack Straw, the then Secretary of State for Justice, said:

Arbitration is not a system of dispute resolution that may be used in family cases. Therefore no draft consent orders embodying the terms of an agreement reached by the use of a Sharia Council have been enforced within the meaning of the *Arbitration Act 1996* in matrimonial proceedings.

However, in 2012 Lord Gardiner of Kimble, answering for the Government during a [Second Reading debate](#) on Baroness Cox’s *Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill*, said:

The Muslim Arbitration Tribunal, established in 2007, provides an alternative route to resolve civil law disputes in accordance with Sharia principles. In both cases this is because the Arbitration Act 1996 allows parties to an arbitration to agree any system of law or rules, other than national laws, to be applied by the arbitral tribunal. Crucially, both parties must freely have agreed to arbitration and to the use of religious principles. Even where religious law considerations have been applied to an arbitration, the resulting decisions are subject to review by the national courts on a number of grounds, including whether the agreement was freely concluded.

The Government has consistently rejected the idea that Sharia law, and in particular Sharia councils, possess any legal authority in the UK. In [January 2016](#), Chris Grayling, then Secretary of State for Justice, said:

Let us be absolutely clear about this. We have one law of the land which applies to every single citizen of this country—to every single person who is in this country—regardless of race, colour or creed. That is beyond question, and, in my view, it can never be different. Systems that offer arbitration services within, for example, religious groups are ultimately not legally binding. Ultimately, the only places in our country that deliver legally binding rulings are our courts, and people in this country can always have recourse to the courts in the event of matters of challenge in their lives.

However, there are concerns that Sharia councils may be establishing legal precedents.<sup>5</sup> According to Amin Al-Astewani, a law lecturer at Lancaster University, the law does provide some avenues for decisions made by Sharia councils to accrue legal status. While the courts retain sole authority

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<sup>5</sup> National Secular Society, [SHL0016](#), para. 8.

over legally-binding judgements, couples who have a religious but not a civil marriage might find themselves to be in a contractual relationship when it comes to any financial agreements that, for example, relate to dowries or other financial settlements agreed in the marriage contract or nikah.<sup>6</sup>

In *Shahnaz v Rizwan* (1965) the plaintiff claimed a payment of £1,400 as the Sterling equivalent of the deferred dower specified in an Islamic marriage contract, payable on the dissolution of the marriage, which occurred when the husband divorced the plaintiff by talaq (verbal revocation of the marriage). The Judge upheld the plaintiff's claim on the grounds it was based on a recognised contractual obligation.

In *Uddin v Choudhury & Ors* (2009) a court was prepared to accept evidence of an arranged marriage under Sharia law for the purposes of civil proceedings that related to a dispute over the return of the dower to the wife's family, and whether gifts made to the wife should be returned to the groom's family.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2 Home Office review

In May 2016, the Home Office launched an independent review of the application of Sharia law in England and Wales.

The review was chaired by Professor Mona Siddiqui, who was supported by a panel of experts including the family law barrister Sam Momtaz QC, retired High Court judge Sir Mark Hedley and specialist family law solicitor Anne Marie Hutchinson OBE QC. The panel was advised by two religious and theological experts, Imam Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi and Imam Qari Asim.

The review's composition was criticised by secular and human rights campaigners and commentators. In July 2016, more than 200 individuals and groups wrote an open letter to the then Home Secretary criticising not only the review's terms of reference, but also the theological background of Mona Siddiqui and the recruitment of religious advisors. Several signatories said they would boycott the review.<sup>8</sup>

[The independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales](#) was presented to Parliament in February 2018. It did not consider the "closure" of Sharia councils to be "a viable option" but made three recommendations to "address the issue of current discriminatory practices". These were:

- **1. legislative change:** amending the *Marriage Act 1949* and the *Matrimonial Causes Act 1973* to ensure that civil marriages are conducted before or at the same time as the Islamic marriage

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<sup>6</sup> Amin Al-Astewani, [SHL0027](#), para. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Midani v Al-Midani (1999) was the first ever reported case to consider the legal status of a Sharia council. The Judge's assessment was as follows: "The bench of the Shari'a Council would seem to provide a welcome facility to the Muslim community of the UK to render decisions on Islamic law, particularly in the matrimonial and family sphere. Its authority appears to rest largely on consent, in as much as it responds to the needs of the community it serves, but it may be that under Shari'a law it has autonomous power, as a religious court, to promulgate decisions in favour of a claimant even against the will of a respondent."

<sup>8</sup> Open Democracy, ["Whitewashing Sharia councils in the UK?"](#), 4 July 2016.

- ceremony, bringing Islamic marriage into line with Christian and Jewish marriage in the eyes of the law;
- **2. awareness campaigns:** so that Muslim communities acknowledge women's rights in civil law, especially in areas of marriage and divorce; send a clear message that an arbitration that applies sharia law in respect of financial remedies and/or child arrangements would fall foul of the *Arbitration Act*; and raise awareness regarding the availability of legal aid;
  - **3. regulation:** the creation of a body to establish a process for councils to regulate themselves, designing a code of practice for Sharia councils to accept and implement.

The third recommendation was not unanimously supported by the review panel, with one member explaining their disagreement in the report.<sup>9</sup>

In a Written Statement, Amber Rudd, the then Home Secretary, said the Government would "carefully consider" the review's findings but explicitly rejected recommendation 3. She said the Government considered that:

the proposal to create a State-facilitated or endorsed regulation scheme for Sharia councils would confer upon them legitimacy as alternative forms of dispute resolution. The Government does not consider there to be a role for the State to act in this way. Britain has a long tradition of freedom of worship and religious tolerance and regulation could add legitimacy to the perception of the existence of a parallel legal system even though the outcomes of Sharia Councils have no standing in civil law, as the independent review has made clear.

The Home Secretary also said the Government would work with the appropriate regulatory authorities to ensure existing legislation "and the protections it establishes are being enforced fully and effectively".<sup>10</sup> The Government will carefully consider the review's findings. The review team's failure to reach a unanimous agreement on recommendation three (regulation of Sharia councils) demonstrates the complexity of the issues. The Government considers that the proposal to create a State-facilitated or endorsed regulation scheme for Sharia councils would confer upon them legitimacy as alternative forms of dispute resolution. The Government does not consider there to be a role for the State to act in this way. Britain has a long tradition of freedom of worship and religious tolerance and regulation could add legitimacy to the perception of the existence of a parallel legal system even though the outcomes of Sharia Councils have no standing in civil law, as the independent review has made clear. Many people of different faiths follow religious codes and practices and benefit from their guidance. The Government has no intention of changing this position and for this reason cannot accept recommendation three

### 1.3 Political controversy

Sharia law has often been politically controversial in the UK. UKIP [was reported as saying](#) that: "the law of the land must apply to us all. We

<sup>9</sup> Home Office Cm 9560, *The independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales*, February 2018, pp5-6.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-02-01/HCWS442>

oppose any other system of law". In 2015, its then leader Nigel Farage [referred to](#) "80 practising Sharia courts around the United Kingdom".

Baroness Cox, who introduced the *Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill* in 2014, [argued](#) that whatever the strict legal position, "the power of Sharia councils lies in how they are perceived by their communities".

The Full Fact website looked at frequent assertions regarding [The UK's Sharia 'courts'](#) in August 2016.

On 22 January 2019, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe agreed the text of [Resolution 2253: Sharia, the Cairo Declaration and the European Convention on Human Rights](#). Paragraph 8 states that the Assembly is:

concerned about the 'judicial' activities of 'Sharia councils' in the United Kingdom. Although they are not considered part of the British legal system, Sharia councils attempt to provide a form of alternative dispute resolution, whereby members of the Muslim community, sometimes voluntarily, often under considerable social pressure, accept the irreligious jurisdiction mainly in marital and Islamic divorce issues, but also in matters relating to inheritance and Islamic commercial contracts. The Assembly is concerned that the rulings of the Sharia councils clearly discriminate against women in divorce and inheritance cases. The Assembly is aware that informal Islamic Courts may exist in other Council of Europe member States too.

More recently, some MPs have also expressed concerns. In a blog dated 11 February 2019, Henley MP John Howell referred to:

the use in the UK of Sharia courts for settling cases by means of Alternative Dispute Resolution methods such as arbitration and mediation. These have no legal status and undermine the role of women.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.4 Academic analysis

In a 2012 [University of Reading paper](#), Dr Samia Bano stated that "fears that (Sharia) councils are forming a parallel legal system appear to be unfounded".

A [report published by Cardiff University](#) also looked at the operation of three religious courts in relation to marriage and divorce. It highlighted the main area of concern as being unregistered marriages, in other words Muslim women who had no option but to use a Sharia council when their relationships broke down because they had a religious but not a legal marriage.

Another concern was the lack of evidence regarding the operation of less formal means of religious arbitration. In another article, Russell Sandberg and Sharon Thompson [suggested remedying this](#) by revisiting the formalities required for marriage and cohabitation rights. In an additional [blog post](#), Sandberg argued that criminalising imams – as advocated by some – would do nothing to advance the rights of Muslim women.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.johnhowellmp.com/john%27s-blog/national-and-local/1477>

## 2. Statistics on Sharia councils

There are no official statistics on the number of Sharia councils in the United Kingdom.

In 2009 the think tank [Civitas](#) identified 85 Sharia councils, including online forums, but admitted that the number was “indeterminate”.<sup>12</sup>

Research undertaken in 2012 by the University of Reading with respect to family law confidently identified [30 major large Sharia councils](#) in England, although smaller Sharia councils were not included. Sharia councils were identified by services offered by the groups in question and whether they identified as Sharia councils using sources including online searches, Muslim directories and a variety of personal networks and contacts.

A 2018 [independent review](#) commissioned by the Home Office on the application of Sharia law in England and Wales again put the number of Sharia councils in England and Wales at between 30 and 85, although it noted the lack of accurate statistical data. It also concluded that, to the best of its knowledge, “there are no sharia councils in Scotland”.<sup>13</sup>

The review observed that the [overwhelming majority](#) of those using Sharia councils were women, of which more than 90% had sought an “Islamic divorce”.

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<sup>12</sup> see Civitas, [Sharia Law or ‘One Law For All’?](#), June 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Home Office Cm 9560, [The independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales](#), February 2018, p4.

## 3. Applying sharia law in England and Wales: independent review

### 3.1 Press notice: Independent review into sharia law launched

**Home Office and The Rt Hon Theresa May MP**

**26 May 2016**

The review will be chaired by Professor Mona Siddiqui, an internationally renowned expert in Islamic and inter-religious studies who was appointed OBE for her services to inter-faith relations. Professor Siddiqui will lead a panel of experts that includes experienced family law barrister Sam Momtaz, retired high court judge Sir Mark Hedley and specialist family law lawyer Anne Marie Hutchinson OBE QC.

The panel will be advised by 2 religious and theological experts – Imam Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi and Imam Qari Asim. They will ensure the panel has a full and thorough understanding of the religious and theological issues relating to specific aspects of sharia law, and the way it is applied.

The Home Secretary committed to an independent review of the application of sharia law as part of the government’s Counter-Extremism Strategy. The strategy notes that many people in England and Wales follow religious codes and practices, and benefit from the guidance they offer. However, there is evidence some sharia councils may be working in a discriminatory and unacceptable way, seeking to legitimise forced marriage and issuing divorces that are unfair to women, contrary to the teachings of Islam. It will also seek out examples of best practice among sharia councils.

The terms of reference set out the review’s intention to explore whether, and to what extent, the application of sharia law may be incompatible with the law in England and Wales. It will examine the ways in which sharia may be being misused, or exploited, in a way that may discriminate against certain groups, undermine shared values and cause social harms.

The panel will begin work immediately and is expected to complete its review in 2017. It is expected to issue a call for evidence to provide an opportunity for groups and individuals to contribute to the review.

Home Secretary Theresa May said:

“Many British people of different faiths follow religious codes and practices, and benefit a great deal from the guidance they offer.

“A number of women have reportedly been victims of what appear to be discriminatory decisions taken by sharia councils, and that is a significant concern. There is only one rule of law in our country, which provides rights and security for every citizen.

“Professor Siddiqui, supported by a panel with a strong balance of academic, religious and legal expertise, will help us better understand whether and the extent to which sharia law is being misused or exploited and make recommendations to the government on how to address this.”

Chair of the sharia law review, Professor Mona Siddiqui, said:

“It’s a privilege to be asked to chair such an important piece of work. At a time when there is so much focus on Muslims in the UK, this will be a wide ranging, timely and thorough review as to what actually happens in sharia councils.”

## 3.2 Independent report

[The independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales](#), 1 Feb 2018, Cm9560

## 4. Parliamentary material

### 4.1 Oral Questions

#### [Islamic Ceremony: Civil Marriage Registration](#)

**Baroness Cox:** To ask Her Majesty's Government, following Resolution 2253 (2019) passed on 22 January by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, what plans they have to review the Marriage Act 1949 to make it a legal requirement for Muslim couples to civilly register their marriage before, or at the same time as, their Islamic ceremony.

**The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie):** My Lords, we recognise that the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, has brought a number of proposals for reform to the House. We are aware of Resolution 2253 from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. We remain committed to exploring the legal and practical challenges of limited reform relating to the law on marriage and religious weddings, as outlined in the Government's recently published Integrated Communities Action Plan.

[.....]

28 Feb 2019 | Oral questions | House of Lords | House of Lords chamber | 796 cc298-299

#### [Sharia Law](#)

**Baroness Cox:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the report of the independent review of the application of sharia law in England and Wales, published on 1 February.

**Baroness Manzoor:** My Lords, the Government are grateful for the independent review team's analysis and comprehensive report. The review found evidence of a range of practices across sharia councils, including women being forced to make concessions to gain a divorce. This is not acceptable. The Government responded to the review's recommendations in a Written Ministerial Statement on 1 February 2018 and in the Integrated Communities Strategy.

**Baroness Cox:** My Lords, I thank the Minister for her sympathetic reply and welcome the Government's response to the sharia law review, which reflects the measures in my Private Member's Bill which would require all religious marriages to be legally registered.

[.....]

24 May 2018 | House of Lords | 791 c1077-1080

#### [Marriage: Humanist Ceremonies](#)

[...]

**Baroness Warsi:** My Lords, is my noble friend aware that Islamic religious marriages are recognised in the UK in law only if they are conducted overseas and not in the United Kingdom? This anomaly is the main reason why women turn to sharia councils when their marriages fail, an issue which my right honourable friend the Prime Minister was discussing earlier

this week. If he is aware of that, and if the recognition of these marriages would stop references to sharia councils and indeed the practice of polygamy, why will the Government not adopt this provision? They have been aware that this is a solution as far back as 2011.

**Lord Faulks:** These are complicated issues. As my noble friend quite rightly says, the Home Secretary has initiated a general inquiry into the use of sharia councils. One area of particular concern is the circumstances in which marriages take place and the fact that there are some people in the Muslim community for whom marriage can be used somewhat oppressively. It is certainly important that all the information is available before we come to any conclusions [...]

21 Jan 2016 | Oral questions | House of Lords | 768 c903

## 4.2 Written Questions

### [Sharia Law Independent Review](#)

**Giles Watling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Government plans to publish its response to the recommendations of the independent review into the application of sharia law in England and Wales.

#### **Victoria Atkins | Home Office**

On 1 February 2018 the Government published the independent Sharia review and confirmed it would not be taking forward the recommendation to regulate Sharia Councils in a Written Ministerial Statement.

The Government's commitments in response to the review can be found in the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper, published on 14 March 2018 and available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>.

06 Feb 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 214073

### [Islam: Legal Systems](#)

**Baroness Cox:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ruling by the Grand Committee of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Molla Sali v. Greece on the application of sharia law, issued on 19 December 2018; what plans, if any, they have to (1) provide support to women and girls in the UK who suffer as a result of the application of sharia law, and (2) ensure that relevant vulnerable people are made aware of their rights in relation to the application of sharia law within the UK judicial system.

**Lord Keen of Elie | Ministry of Justice:** The Grand Chamber found that the difference of treatment suffered by the applicant, as a beneficiary of a will drawn up in accordance with the Greek Civil Code by a testator of Muslim faith, as compared to a beneficiary of a will drawn up in accordance with the Civil Code by a non-Muslim testator, had no objective and reasonable justification, contrary to the applicant's rights under Article 14 of the

European Convention on Human Rights read in conjunction with Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention. The Government's initial assessment is that the judgment does not affect inheritance law in England and Wales. Inheritance law in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a devolved matter.

People may choose to abide by the interpretation and application of Sharia principles if they wish to do so, provided their actions do not conflict with the national law. All individuals retain the right to seek a remedy through the English and Welsh courts in the event of a dispute, and the law of England and Wales in relation to the inheritance of property prevails.

The independent Sharia review was published in February 2018. The Government's commitments in response, including supporting awareness raising campaigns with voluntary organisations, can be found in the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper published in March 2018.

21 Jan 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL12576

#### [Legal Systems: Islam](#)

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department gave any funding to sharia councils in the UK in each in the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

**Lucy Frazer | Department: Ministry of Justice:** The Ministry of Justice has not funded the operation of sharia councils in the last three years, as these organisations are not part of the justice system. Community organisations may apply to various Government Departments for a range of grants for particular purposes. A list of grant schemes run by government departments can be found at gov.uk. Information on whether sharia councils may have received such grants over this period could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

09 May 2018 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 139436

#### [Engagements](#)

**Philip Davies:** Last year, I attended a meeting in the House of Lords organised by the wonderful Cross-Bench peer and human rights campaigner Baroness Cox, at which three very brave women told us their harrowing tales of how they had been treated and discriminated against by sharia councils. It is amazing how noisy feminists in this place are so quiet about this issue, given that women are being discriminated against so blatantly in this country. Is it not time that this alternative, discriminatory form of justice was no longer tolerated in this country?

**The Prime Minister:** Let me say to my hon. Friend that we are very clear that there is one rule of law in the United Kingdom, and that is British law. But he is right, and I too have heard stories from individual women who were discriminated against, or felt that they had been discriminated against, and treated badly as a result of decisions by sharia courts. That is why, when I was Home Secretary, I set up the review of those courts.

I believe that it published its report recently, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will respond to that shortly.

28 Feb 2018 | Prime Minister's questions | House of Commons | 636 c829

### [Legal Systems: Islam](#)

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Sharia Councils are based in the UK.

**Sir Oliver Heald | Department: Ministry of Justice:** The information requested can be found on the Parliament website in a letter from Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen dated 12 December 2016 and deposited in the House of Lords Library, regarding the Policing and Crime Bill committee stage debate and Sharia councils (reference DEP2016-0912).

09 Feb 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 62936

## 4.3 Home Affairs Committee

### [Sharia councils inquiry – Concluded](#)

The Home Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into Sharia councils operating in the UK. The Committee examined how Sharia councils operate in practice, their work resolving family and divorce disputes and their relationship with the British legal system.

Due to the general election on 8 June 2017 the Committee has now closed this inquiry. Following the dissolution of Parliament on 3 May 2017, all Select Committees cease to exist until after the general election. If an inquiry on this subject is held in the future, the Committee may refer to the evidence already gathered as part of this inquiry.

### [Sharia councils examined by Committee](#)

Home Affairs Committee questions lawyers and organisations on Sharia councils

### [All Sharia councils inquiry publications](#)

## Lords Library Briefing

[Cohabitation Rights Bill \[HL\]](#), Briefing for Lords Stages, 11 Mar 2019

House of Lords Library Briefing prepared in advance of the second reading of the Cohabitation Rights Bill [HL] in the House of Lords on 15 March 2019.

## 5. Press material

*Please note: The Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.*

### [Council of Europe calls for Muslim couples in UK to legally have to register marriage before or during Islamic ceremony](#)

**The Independent, Maya Oppenheim**

**24 Jan 2019**

'The assembly is concerned that the rulings of the Sharia councils clearly discriminate against women in divorce and inheritance cases.'

### [The Judge review – thoughtful study of the first female sharia judge](#)

**The Guardian, Peter Bradshaw**

**22 Nov 2018**

Documentary by Erika Cohn depicting the life and work of Dr Kholoud al-Faqih, who in 2009 became one of only two women appointed as judges in the sharia courts of the Palestinian territories.

### [British court recognises sharia law in landmark divorce case; Judge rules woman must be allowed to make a claim on husband's assets](#)

**The Telegraph, Kate McCann**

**1 Aug 2018**

The High Court ruled that an estranged couple's Islamic faith marriage, conducted in a ceremony called a nikah, falls under British matrimonial law despite it not being legally recognised as such.

### [Muslim women 'given hope' by High Court ruling that sharia marriages can be covered by English law](#)

**The Independent**

**2 Aug 2018**

Judge says finding over one couple's circumstances does not cover all Islamic marriages in UK

### [The Guardian view on Muslim marriage: one way forward](#)

**The Guardian**

**6 Aug 2018**

A judgment in the English family court suggests a way to extend rights to some married Muslim women without recognising sharia law

[Register Islamic marriages under civil law, sharia review says; Report endorses civil marriage alongside religious ceremony to give women legal protection in UK](#)

**The Guardian, Harriet Sherwood**

**1 Feb 2018**

A report following the 18-month review called for an awareness campaign informing Muslim women of their legal rights, and said sharia councils should be subject to regulation with a code of conduct. However, the Home Office said it would not adopt the recommendation on regulation.

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