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COI QUERY RESPONSE

PAKISTAN – INFORMATION ON ARRANGED MARRIAGES

The *US Department of State* Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in April 2024 reported that: “In rural areas, poor parents sometimes sold their daughters into marriage, in some cases to settle debts or disputes. Although forced marriage was a criminal offense, many filed cases were not prosecuted. A children's rights NGO stated authorities received reports of 14 cases of child marriage from January to June.”¹

The *US Department of State* Trafficking in Persons Report in June 2023 mentioned that: “Some Pakistani traffickers lure women and girls away from their families with promises of marriage, create fraudulent marriage certificates, and exploit women and girls in sex trafficking, including in Iran and Afghanistan. Traffickers target impoverished Christian communities to send women and girls to the People's Republic of China (PRC) for arranged marriages. Upon arrival in the PRC, hundreds of Pakistani women reported their "husbands" forced them into commercial sex.”²

In December 2022 the *Population Council* states that: “Girls are perceived as an economic burden; safety and security, food, shelter, and health comprise critical household expenditures, and parents gain by shifting the economic responsibility for their girl child to her marital home while reserving their resources for their male children, who are perceived as economic assets. Arranging dowry and marriage expenditures for poor households at times translates into child marriage to financially well-off older men. In Punjab, child marriages are more common in rural areas.”³

¹ US Department of State (22 April 2024) 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan, p.33

² US Department of State (15 June 2023) Trafficking in Persons Report 2023: Pakistan

³ Population Council (22 December 2022) Child Marriage in Punjab: A Political Economy Analysis and Policy Options [Executive Summary], p.10

The *UK Home Office* in November 2022 mentioned that: “Most marriages in Pakistan are arranged. Marriage of choice is often referred to as 'love marriage', which may occur with or without the parent's consent. According to a 2019 Gilani Research Foundation Survey using a nationally representative sample of 1,287 married men and women, 85% of Pakistanis met their spouse through parents or close relatives and only 5% said they had a love marriage.”⁴

The *National Commission for Human Rights (Pakistan)* in August 2022 notes that: “A few months ago, the National Commission for Human Rights received a troubled call informing us that the caller's friend and roommate Rukhsana* had been forcefully locked in a rehabilitation center and psychiatric clinic in the outskirts of Islamabad for 9 days. NCHR took immediate action, and with police and officials from the Health department in tow, rescued Rukhsana, a 35 year old woman with an MPhil who serves as a senior level employee at a Multinational Company. She was sane, but shaken. In a detailed interview at the Commission, it transpired that Rukhsana's abduction and incarceration was an attempt by her parents to convince her to marry the man of their choice. The anger and frustration that she felt towards an unwelcome arranged marriage was diagnosed as 'depression' by a local psychiatrist, who then referred her to the psychiatric clinic and rehabilitation center where she was detained without consent.”⁵

Center for Reproductive Rights (USA) in July 2022 points out that: “An increasing number of self-arranged marriages involving adolescent girls are reported in Pakistan's media. These cases often involve adolescent girls in romantic relationships who leave their parents' home and marry their partners. Due to patriarchal norms, young boys and girls are unable to engage in consensual relationships outside marriage and that is one factor motivating them to escape from their families and marry. Parents of the girls often approach the police and courts to have the marriages annulled and also charge the boys or men with kidnapping or rape. Even after the police recovers the girls, no counselling or health services are provided to her. If the girls refuse to return to their parents, courts sometimes order that the girls be detained in shelters, where their freedom of movement is severely hampered.”⁶

The *Jubilee Campaign USA* in July 2022 reported that: “In May 2022, two Pakistani Spanish sisters Aneesa, 20, and Arooj Abbas, 24, traveled to their home country of Pakistan and were subsequently strangled and shot to death by their family for requesting divorces from the distant cousins they were arranged into marriage with.”⁷

⁴ UK Home Office (18 November 2022) Country Policy and Information Note - Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence (November 2022), p.25

⁵ National Commission for Human Rights (Pakistan) (24 August 2022) Malpractice in Mental Health in Pakistan: A Call for Regulation, p.2

⁶ Center for Reproductive Rights (USA) (13 July 2022) Joint Submission to Universal Periodic Review of Pakistan (Sexual and reproductive rights), p.5

⁷ Jubilee Campaign USA (12 July 2022) Submission to the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review: Pakistan (Blasphemy; Gender-based violence)

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