

[News story: Home Secretary opens conference to tackle FGM and forced marriage](#)

Home Secretary Sajid Javid has rallied governments, campaigners and communities to help boost the response to the “medieval practices” of forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Hundreds of activists have convened at the International Conference on Ending FGM and Forced Marriage for a 2-day gathering, organised by the Home Office, aimed to strengthen the response to these barbaric crimes.

This afternoon (Thursday 15 November) the Home Secretary opened the conference and launched a public consultation into whether there should be a mandatory reporting duty for forced marriage and updating the existing statutory guidance on forced marriage.

He also unveiled posters and a video that will be used in an upcoming forced marriage awareness campaign. The materials highlight that forced marriage is a crime and direct victims and concerned parties to contact the Forced Marriage Helpline for help and support.

During his [speech](#), Home Secretary Sajid Javid, said:

Governments worldwide have a crucial role to play in bringing an end to what can only be described as medieval practices.

These are crimes which in my view are despicable, inhumane and uncivilised.

I’m clear that by working together, we can end these appalling crimes and build a safer world for our children – and more specifically – for our daughters.

The conference, held in London, brings together international FGM and forced marriage experts, law enforcement, politicians, activists and survivors. It acts as a forum to discuss the response to the crimes and to share best practice, strengthen links and consider further action that can be taken internationally.

The [public consultation on forced marriage](#) will consider whether a mandatory duty to report should be introduced. If it is introduced it will identify which professionals the duty would apply to, the specific circumstances where a case would have to be reported and potential sanctions for failure to comply with the duty. It will also explore how the existing statutory guidance for professionals on forced marriage could be strengthened.

The awareness campaign, to be rolled out in due course, has been developed in partnership with campaigners. It aims to educate the public and potential victims on what constitutes a forced marriage and raise awareness of the emotional and psychological pressures that are faced by victims.

Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Minister Victoria Atkins, who speaks at the conference tomorrow, added:

FGM and forced marriage are devastating crimes which can cause severe and lifelong physical, psychological and emotional harm.

Everyone should have the opportunity to make the most of their potential, without fear that they may be hurt by those closest to them.

I continue to be deeply impressed by the extraordinary level of energy and commitment from everyone working towards eradicating these crimes.

According to a City University and Equality Now study, part funded by the Home Office, it is estimated that 137,000 women and girls who have migrated to England and Wales are living with the consequences of FGM. Approximately 60,000 girls aged 0 to 14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM.

In 2017, the Forced Marriage Unit provided support in 1,196 cases and, to date, more than 1,600 Forced Marriage Protection Orders and 248 FGM Protection Orders have been made to protect victims and those at risk and to assist in repatriating victims.

The UK government has taken the lead in tackling these barbaric crimes. Measures taken by the government include:

FGM

- strengthening the law through the Serious Crime Act 2015 to improve protection for victims and those at risk, including introducing lifelong anonymity for victims of FGM, bringing in civil FGM Protection Orders and introducing a mandatory reporting duty for known cases in under 18s
- developing an FGM communications campaign to educate communities about the long-term health consequences of FGM
- providing resources for frontline professionals, including a resource pack, free e-learning, statutory multi-agency guidance and a range of communication materials

Forced marriage

- we have introduced a specific criminal offence of forced marriage, lifelong anonymity for victims, and criminalised breach of a Forced Marriage Protection Order
- to date, almost 1,500 Forced Marriage Protection Orders have been made

to prevent people from being forced into a marriage

- the joint Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) provides support and advice for victims, those at risk, and professionals, through its public helpline – in the last year the FMU's outreach work has improved the capability of thousands of frontline professionals to ensure victims and those at risk are safeguarded