

Declaration

One Law for All - A campaign against Sharia law in Britain

Tuesday 11 November 2008, by [Council of ex-Muslims UK](#) (Date first published: 10 November 2008).

We, the undersigned individuals and organisations, call on the UK government to bring an end to the use and institutionalisation of Sharia and all religious laws and to guarantee equal citizenship rights for all.

Sharia law is discriminatory

Sharia Councils and Muslim Arbitration Tribunals are discriminatory, particularly against women and children, and in violation of universal human rights.

Sharia law is unfair and unjust in civil matters

Proponents argue that the implementation of Sharia is justified when limited to civil matters, such as child custody, divorce and inheritance. In fact, it is civil matters that are one of the main cornerstones of the subjugation of and discrimination against women and children. Under Sharia law a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's; a woman's marriage contract is between her male guardian and her husband. A man can have four wives and divorce his wife by simple repudiation, whereas a woman must give reasons, some of which are extremely difficult to prove. Child custody reverts to the father at a preset age, even if the father is abusive; women who remarry lose custody of their children; and sons are entitled to inherit twice the share of daughters.

The voluntary nature of Sharia courts is a sham

Proponents argue that those who choose to make use of Sharia courts and tribunals do so voluntarily and that according to the Arbitration Act parties are free to agree upon how their disputes are resolved. In reality, many of those dealt with by Sharia courts are from the most marginalised segments of society with little or no knowledge of their rights under British law. Many, particularly women, are pressured into going to these courts and abiding by their decisions. More importantly, those who fail to make use of Sharia law or seek to opt out will be made to feel guilty and can be treated as apostates and outcasts.

Even if completely voluntary, which is untrue, the discriminatory nature of the courts would be sufficient reason to bring an end to their use and implementation.

Sharia law is a quick and cheap way to injustice

Proponents argue that Sharia courts are an alternative method of dispute resolution and curb legal aid costs. When it comes to people's rights, however, cuts in costs and speed can only bring about serious miscarriages of justice. Many of the laws that Sharia courts and religious tribunals aim to avoid have been fought for over centuries in order to improve the rights of those most in need of protection in society.

Sharia law doesn't promote minority rights and social cohesion

Proponents argue that the right to be governed by Sharia law is necessary to defend minority rights. Having the right to religion or atheism, however, is not the same as having the 'right' to be governed by religious laws. This is merely a prescription for discrimination, inequality and culturally relative rights. Rather than defending rights, it discriminates and sets up different and separate systems, standards and norms for 'different' people. It reinforces the fragmentation of society, and leaves large numbers of people, particularly women and children, at the mercy of elders and imams. It increases marginalisation and the further segregation of immigrant communities. It ensures that immigrants and new arrivals remain forever minorities and never equal citizens.

One law for all

Whilst arbitration tribunals are part of British law, they are subject to such safeguards as are necessary in the public interest. Clearly, public interest, and particularly the interests of women and children, requires an end to Sharia and all faith-based courts and tribunals.

Rights, justice, inclusion, equality and respect are for people, not beliefs. In a civil society, people must have full citizenship rights and equality under the law. Clearly, Sharia law contravenes fundamental human rights. In order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of all those living in Britain, there must be one secular law for all and no Sharia.

We call on the UK government to recognise that Sharia and all religious laws are arbitrary and discriminatory against women and children in particular. Citizenship and human rights are non-negotiable.

We demand an end to all Sharia courts and religious tribunals on the basis that they work against and not for equality and human rights.

We demand that the Arbitration Act 1996 be amended so that all religious tribunals are banned from operating within and outside of the legal system.

Council of ex-Muslims UK

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Press Releases

There is no place for sharia in Britain. February 11, 2008

The Council of ex-Muslims of Britain condemns the comments made by the Archbishop of Canterbury suggesting that Sharia law is 'inevitable' and may be welcome in civil cases.

The distinction that he makes between civil and criminal cases does not exist within Sharia law. Sharia law encompasses all aspects of the life of those deemed Muslim. Suggesting that the UK would not, of course, allow the more barbaric aspects of Sharia law, such as amputation or stoning, ignores the fact that it is the family/civil areas of law in the Sharia that are some of the most iniquitous.

In the discriminatory personal family law, particularly in the areas of marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance and so on, a Muslim woman cannot even contract her own marriage; the marriage contract is between her guardian and husband. A man can have 4 wives whilst a woman cannot. A man can divorce his wife without reasons by simply saying 'divorce' thrice, albeit with a gap in time, whereas a woman must give reasons, some of which are extremely difficult to prove. A woman only receives half that of a man under inheritance rules, and so on.

Clearly, Sharia law contravenes fundamental human rights, such as equal rights for women, and relegates those deemed to be 'Muslim' to culturally relative rights and at the mercy of regressive imams and kangaroo courts.

In order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of all those living in Britain, there must be one secular law for all and no Sharia.