

**NATIONAL REPORT, SWEDEN**

**”FLYING TEAM AGAINST VIOLENCE”**

**COMBATING HONOUR RELATED VIOLENCE,  
FORCED MARRIAGES, AND ABANDONING**



**ALMAeuropa**

## **"FLYING TEAM AGAINST VIOLENCE"**

Combating honour related violence, forced marriages, and abandoning

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Sweden

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE REPORT

This report is about the ways that honour related violence and repression, forced marriages, and abandoning are understood and handled in Sweden. It has been produced as part of the EU project "Flying Team against Violence", and its purpose is to describe definitions, political climate, publicity policy, success factors, and good examples in Sweden. The report has been written during the period 2010-2012.

### 1.2 THE PROJECT

In January 2011, the EU project "Flying Team against Violence" was launched by the principal partners Movisie (The Netherlands), Welsaen and Kezban (The Netherlands), ALMAeuropa (Sweden), Papatya (Germany) and MIGS (Cyprus). In addition to the European participants the project attracted a partner from Turkey, country of origin for one of the largest immigrant groups in Europe. Up until 2012 the Turkish partner was Kalkınma Atoyesi (Development Workshop). Our new Turkish partner, Bağımsız Kadın Derneği (Autonomous Women's Association), officially linked up in February 2012. The project is funded by the Daphne III programme, which is a part of the European Commission.

The project places its focus on interventions that counteract harmful traditions such as honour related violence, forced marriages, and abandoning. These interventions

are often carried out by non-profit organizations, and one postulation within the project is that the work of these organizations is very beneficial to society, but unfortunately also underrated. The aim of the project is to create awareness of and show support for the work of non-profit organizations. The project shall also gather non-profit organizations in an international network for exchange of knowledge and experience, development of existing work methods, and to advance the role of the organizations in society.

## **Good examples**

The project team has carried out a European study and described good work methods, so called good examples, that are practiced within the non-profit sector. Which methods may be used to successfully shape awareness and create discussion about harmful traditions such as honour related violence and forced marriages? What can be done to effectively empower the individual and strengthen her/his ability to withstand group pressure and violence? The result of the study is published both in national reports in the participating countries (this being the Swedish report) and in a European report, which will be made available in English.

## **The Flying Team**

One good example from each participating country is described in detail in a tool box. The tool box is circulated by the Flying Team, which was put together in January 2012. The team consists of one representative from each participating country and introduces the tool box at national meetings in the participating countries. During these national meetings, supervision and workshops are offered to organizations and associations. Politicians, debaters and other key persons are invited, too. The purpose of this project is to create a network for non-profit organizations from various European countries. The organizations will hopefully learn from one another and start implementing new and successful strategies and methods in their countries.

## **1.3 METHOD**

In order to put this report together, we have interviewed representatives from non-profit organizations and one governmental department. We have also examined the positions of the government and the parliament through studies of different documents published on the government website and by other authorities such as the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, the County Administrative Boards, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Police. Furthermore, we have gathered material based on debate articles and publications produced by NGOs and opinion-makers associated with the topic.

## 1.4 PRESENTATION OF THE INTERVIEWEE ORGANIZATIONS

The information about the non-profit organizations below is partly taken from their respective websites.

	Organization	Respondent	Interview date
1	Tänk Om!	Newroz Ötunc	2011-08-18
2	GAPF	Sara Mohammad	2011-08-18
3	Nätverk mot HRV	Josef Wijk	2011-08-18
4	Höganäs kvinnojour	Stevie Ahlqvist	2011-08-25
5	Humanisterna	Emilia Ericson	2011-09-25
6	Kvinnors Nätverk	Azam Qarai	2011-09-14
7	Utbildningsdepartementet	Lisa Modée	2011-09-01
8	Elektra	Alan Ali	Declined
9	ALMAeuropa	Eduardo Grutzky	2011-09-01

### Tänk Om! [www.tankom.net](http://www.tankom.net)

Tänk Om! is an association based in Malmö. It focuses on the links between honour related violence, substance addiction and criminality. The association works with group activities, lectures, educational programmes, supervising, and individual support. Tänk Om! collaborates with the Swedish Prison and Probation Service and is funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund, the City of Malmö, the Swedish National Institute of Public Health, and others. "Separate worlds" is a project run by Tänk Om! with the support of the Swedish Inheritance Fund. The aim of the project is to create a preemptive method for working with young persons, who are exposed to honour related violence and because of this are at risk of becoming addicted or criminal. Tänk Om! was noted in the media in 2012 when a woman, who received support from the association, was murdered in Landskrona. This murder is seen as an honour killing.

([http://www.tv4play.se/nyheter\\_och\\_debatt/nyhetsmorgon?title=efter\\_hedersmordet\\_i\\_landskrona&videoid=2186466](http://www.tv4play.se/nyheter_och_debatt/nyhetsmorgon?title=efter_hedersmordet_i_landskrona&videoid=2186466))

## **GAPF (Glöm Aldrig Pela och Fadime)**

**[www.pelafadime.se](http://www.pelafadime.se)**

The national Glöm Aldrig Pela och Fadime association (GAPF) is a secular and non-profit organization working to assist exposed immigrant women and girls. The aim is to inform them of their openings to receive help in Swedish society, inform them of their obvious human rights, and to give advice. The association is also engaged in preventing violence against women by bringing up the honour issues in the public debate. The national organization consists of six local associations in Stockholm, Uppsala, Göteborg, Malmö, Sundsvall, and Skellefteå.

The association was founded in 2001, by Sara Mohammad, under the name Glöm Aldrig Pela-föreningen, but changed its name to the current Glöm Aldrig Pela och Fadime-riksföreningen after the murder of Fadime Sahindal in 2002. The association soon expanded its activities, having first been active mainly in the greater Stockholm region, to the national level through the founding of several local associations around the country.

GAPF is probably the most well-known organization in Sweden working against honour related violence. Through the years, its chairperson Sara Mohammad has participated in hundreds of activities, demonstrations and meetings paying attention to the victims of honour related violence. GAPF has been an important opinion-maker in relation to politicians and the general public. In 2008, Sara Mohammad received the award "Swedish hero" from the newspaper Aftonbladet.

## **Nätverket mot Hedersrelaterat våld**

**[www.minheder.nu](http://www.minheder.nu)**

Nätverket mot hedersrelaterat våld is an international umbrella organization working to encourage collaboration between non-profit organizations and public institutions in society. Its purpose is to create a strong network and to build bridges between the different parties in order to shape a safe environment for the individuals exposed to honour related violence, and also to work as a pressure group in relation to politicians, authorities and institutions.

## **Höganäs kvinnojour [www.kvinnojourenhoganas.se](http://www.kvinnojourenhoganas.se)**

The women's aid group Höganäs kvinnojour has functioned since March 2005. It helps individuals, who are or have been at risk of becoming exposed to violence in a close relationship, or to violence and repression in the name of honour, get assistance, support and protection.

The aim of Höganäs kvinnojour is to work with and for the vision of "A gender equal society free from violence" through information and educational efforts. The activities include an aid phone open to individuals from all age groups, who are, or have been at risk of becoming exposed to physical and/or psychological violence. The women's aid group also offers temporary housing and individual dialogue. They can also help with contacts with the authorities involved for individuals who have been battered or otherwise exposed to abuse. The aid group collaborates with other agencies in society working against violence. Höganäs kvinnojour may accompany the individual as support in court, on visits to the doctor, etc. As the first aid group in

the country, Höganäs kvinnojour also offers assistance to men, with protected housing, dialogue support, and help with contacts with authorities. For a long time there has been a demand for protected housing for young men, who are exposed to violence and repression in the name of honour by their families and/or other relatives.

## **Humanisterna [www.humanisterna.se](http://www.humanisterna.se)**

Humanisterna is an organization with a large number of local, associated groups in Sweden. Even though the core issues that Humanisterna deal with have traditionally been linked to opinion-making in favour of a secular society and against religious repression, the organization over the past few years has run several projects and arranged many debates on honour related violence. Humanisterna does not offer any curative activities, but the media penetrating power of the organization has meant that its positions have affected the public debate. On the organization's website, Humanisterna writes:

"Humanism also advocates a secular and pluralistic society characterized by respect, compassion, justice, solidarity, and responsibility. Humanism advocates science and democratic means as the best tools available to solve societal problems and to respond to the collective challenges of mankind. Humanism defends the unfettered search within science and the application of scientific methods in the creation of human welfare. Humanism strives to have science used in ways that best serve humanity. The use of science and technology must always have human values and needs as a starting point, and their application must promote good ideals."

## **Kvinnors Nätverk [www.kvinnonet.net](http://www.kvinnonet.net)**

Kvinnors Nätverk is a non-profit association at the grassroots level, with active members and supporters. Several of the more prominent members are women's rights activists with long experience from work for human rights, both in their old home countries and in Sweden. Kvinnors Nätverk was founded in 1994, connected to the local radio show "Kvinnors Röst" ("The Voice of Women"), which is broadcasted in Persian. Through the radio show, the network got in touch with a large number of women who needed support in an exposed situation.

Their activities grew over time, from informal dialogue support to permanent support work for women and children exposed to violence. Today, Kvinnors Nätverk functions as an established and highly in demand knowledge centre in terms of the rights of youth and women in Sweden.

One of the most important aspects of their work is to make visible the responsibilities of society and to demand of politicians and authorities that society also takes on its full responsibility. Today, Kvinnors Nätverk runs Linnamottagningen, which offers dialogue support and urgent housing for both young women and men exposed to honour related violence.

## **ALMAeuropa [www.almaeuropa.org](http://www.almaeuropa.org)**

ALMAeuropa is a non-profit organization, that started its activities in 2006. ALMAeuropa works within a broad field covering human rights, and has made a name for itself by trying to create work methods that can also be used in the public sector. ALMAeuropa has produced two method books in connection to honour related violence. The publications include "Från tvångsäktenskap till balkongmord" ("From Forced Marriages to Balcony Killings") (2008), "SHIELDS - heder i Sverige" ("SHIELDS – honour in Sweden") (2009), and "Hbt och heder" ("LGBT and Honour" (2011, with RFSL Ungdom). Four of the organization's current projects are related to the honour complex of problems: "Flying Team against Violence", "LGBT and Honour" in collaboration with RFSL Ungdom (website support at [www.hbtheder.se](http://www.hbtheder.se)), "MR-ronden", which is a method for discussing human rights in youth environments, in collaboration with KEKS ([www.keks.nu](http://www.keks.nu)), and "Sexualkunskap för nyanlända" ("Sex Education for Newly Arrived Immigrants"), which has just received funding and is expected to begin in September 2012.

# 2

## THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SWEDEN

### 2.1 DEFINITIONS AND THE EXTENT OF VIOLENCE

The Swedish government is using the following definition of honour related violence:

"Honour related violence and repression, like male violence against women in general, are grounded in cultural notions about gender, power, and sexuality. In these ideas about honour, the notion of virginity and chastity is central and the reputation and respectability of the family are seen as dependent on the actual or alleged behaviour of girls and women. The control can extend from everyday restrictions involving for example clothes, social company and freedom of movement to life choices such as education, job, marriage and divorce.

Boys as well as homosexuals, bisexuals and individuals with a gender transcending identity and expression can also be affected. In its most extreme form the control can lead to violent threats and violence, including fatal violence."

(<http://regeringen.se/sb/d/2593/a/156355>)

Honour related violence (HRV) is a new concept in our part of the world. However, the phenomenon as such has existed for thousands of years. ALMAeuropa also uses the following definitions and reasoning in relation to HRV:

"The project uses the term 'crimes of honour' to encompass a variety of manifestations of violence against women, including 'honour killings', assault, confinement or imprisonment, and interference with choice in marriage, where the publicly articulated 'justification' is attributed to a social order claimed to require the preservation of a concept of 'honour' vested in male (family and/or conjugal) control over women and specifically women's sexual conduct: actual, suspected or potential." (Welchman and Hossain, 2007, p. 4)

The same authors underline, however, that "working on 'crimes of honour' as a form of violence against women does not imply that men are not also subjected to such crimes. For example, in the province of Sindh in 1998, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan analyzed the deaths of 97 men as well as 158 women in *karo-kari* 'honour killings'". (Welchman and Hossain, 2007, p.6) ([www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA33/018/1999](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA33/018/1999))

Men, who are victims of HRV, have occasionally refused to marry the woman that the clan/family has chosen for them; they have refused to control the sexuality of the women, or they have a sexuality other than the norm.

The Norwegian anthropologist Unni Wikan phrases it this way:

"The victim can be a woman or a man, a child or an adult. Usually she is a young woman on the threshold to becoming a grownup. But her boyfriend may also lose his life. The honour demands nothing less in some societies, including societies that are a part of the Nordic region today." (Unni Wikan, 2008, p.10)

In 2000, Asma Jahangir, then *Special Rapporteur* for the United Nations, wrote:

"The prevalence of honour killings is more common, but not unique to, countries where the majority of the population is Muslim. In this respect, one must acknowledge that a number of Muslim leaders and academics have publicly denounced honour killings and declared that they lack religious foundation." (UN, Asma Jahangir, p. 27) ([http://193.194.138.190/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/b72f2cfe9aa28e58802568ab003c572e/\\$FILE/G0010389.pdf](http://193.194.138.190/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/b72f2cfe9aa28e58802568ab003c572e/$FILE/G0010389.pdf))

HRV exists in northern Africa, the Middle East, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey and certain regions in the Balkan countries. HRV also exists in every country to which people with their origin in these regions have moved.

In 2011, ALMAeuropa published, in collaboration with RFSL Ungdom, the interview-based study "Hbt och Heder" ("LGBT and Honour"), which is the first Swedish preparation of stories and analysis regarding LGBT persons growing up in

families with honour norms. The book illuminates the exposed situation that LGBT persons find themselves in when family "reputation" may be "stained" by someone challenging the hetero norm, as well as the shortcomings of the authorities when it comes to providing these individuals with the support they need.

In literature, there are many references to the prevalence of HRV in South America. In certain South American countries, like Brazil and Argentina, men who have committed crimes against women have been able to benefit from legislation, which has regarded their criminality as less serious when it has been linked to a need to defend the stained male "honour". However, nothing suggests that there exists in these societies a collective and studious repression of all women in a family, something that can be observed in honour ideological environments. (Welchman and Hossain, 2007, p. 245)

The Swedish debate was for a long time dominated by a crippling discussion about whether HRV existed or not. Some academics, anxious not to stigmatize certain groups where HRV exists, engaged in total denial of its prevalence. There was no such thing as HRV, they argued. What existed was "male violence against women", an all-embracing and universal term attached to patriarchal violence. The problem with this reasoning is that it explains only one part of reality and makes other parts invisible. Male violence against women does exist, but it exists *parallel* to HRV. Each time a woman is killed by a man in the Middle East, it does not have to be an honour killing. The patriarchal violence exists there, too. *In addition to* the patriarchal violence, there is an oppressive category which has come to be known as HRV.

Unni Wikan writes:

"The benefit with honour killings is precisely the honour gained in the eyes of others – and therefore also your own. Murder linked to jealousy seldom gets applause from other people. It does not bring any honour." (Wikan, 2008, p.15)

A schematic summary of HRV versus "Male violence against women" could look like this:

Male violence against women	Honour related violence
It is committed individually, the perpetrator usually is a man who has had a relationship with the victim, who is a woman.	Collective decisions are made before the crime is committed, the perpetrators can be anyone from the collective. The victim may be a man. The perpetrator can be a woman.
Society strongly condemns violence against women and puts up resources to prevent, prosecute, and give the victims support.	The group (the environment, fellow countrymen, relatives, neighbours) accepts the reasoning behind HRV and displays different levels of acceptance/understanding.

### **"Married against one's will"**

The statistics concerning HRV have, for obvious reasons, always been flawed. In the

countries of origin, HRV has often been described as a family matter, an issue that is dealt with internally within the family or the clan. Some countries have had – and several still have – normative regulations that decisively lower the culpability of the violence if it is inflicted in order to protect family honour. The figure 5,000 honour killings per year in the entire world (one third refer to men), which is routinely given, a piece of information coming from Amnesty International, most probably is a strong underestimation of the true number. (Wikan, 2008, p.63)

In Sweden, HRV was not noticed until the murder of Pela Atroshi in 1999, but then became a national issue after the murder of Fadime Sahindal on January 21, 2002. During the first years following the murder of Sahindal it was primarily non-profit organizations, more often than not ethnically based women's organizations, that fought to have interventions put in place to counteract HRV.

At the time there was not any scientific material to estimate the scale of the afflicted group. There was talk of "thousands of women" or "tens of thousands of women" without anyone being able to account for how these figures came into being. It was not until 2009, due to an investigation in the city of Stockholm and primarily through the "Gift mot sin vilja" ("Married against One's Will") report from the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, that figures could be presented that reflect the prevalence of HRV in Sweden.

The result surprised a lot of people. For example, "Gift mot sin vilja" showed that 70,000 young Swedes – corresponding to 5 percent of all young people aged between 16 and 25 – fear that they will not be able to freely choose the partner they will marry. Since forced marriage is a severe form of HRV (less serious repressive methods may include curfew, forced clothing or having to stay home from school), there is reason to presume that the number of individuals who are subject to coercion is in the hundreds of thousands. Thus, HRV is one of the major social problems in today's Swedish society.

([www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/order\\_item/0,2568,,00.html?itemId=ff808081234c242301234c4bbb830004](http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/order_item/0,2568,,00.html?itemId=ff808081234c242301234c4bbb830004))

## 2.2 POLITICAL CLIMATE

It is a difficult task to describe the political climate in Sweden in relation to immigration, refugees, and HRV. Different parts of society have their own "climates" and understand the complex of problems in different ways. However, it is safe to say that multiculturalism as a political-ideological system is under fire, while at the same time Swedish society as a whole does not show any sign of opposition against a multicultural society. What does this mean? How is this tension expressed in the political life?

Over the past few years Sweden has received a large number of immigrants, most of them coming from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. The immigration statistics for the period 2005-2011 show that the majority of those receiving a residence permit have arrived via family reunions or labour migration.

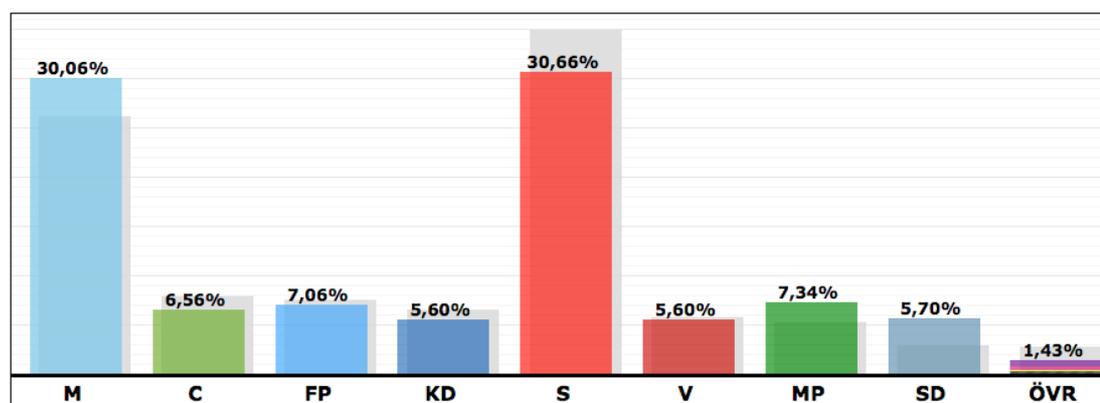
#### Folkmängd och befolkningsförändringar 2005-2011

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Folkmängd 31 dec</b>	<b>9 047 752</b>	<b>9 113 257</b>	<b>9 182 927</b>	<b>9 256 347</b>	<b>9 340 682</b>	<b>9 415 570</b>	<b>9 482 855</b>
Kvinnor	4 561 202	4 589 734	4 619 006	4 652 637	4 691 668	4 725 326	4 756 021
Män	4 486 550	4 523 523	4 563 921	4 603 710	4 649 014	4 690 244	4 726 834
<b>Folkökning</b>	<b>36 360</b>	<b>65 505</b>	<b>69 670</b>	<b>73 420</b>	<b>84 335</b>	<b>74 888</b>	<b>67 285</b>
Kvinnor	16 121	28 532	29 272	33 631	39 031	33 658	30 695
Män	20 239	36 973	40 398	39 789	45 304	41 230	36 590
<b>Födda</b>	<b>101 346</b>	<b>105 913</b>	<b>107 421</b>	<b>109 301</b>	<b>111 801</b>	<b>115 641</b>	<b>111 770</b>
Flickor	49 310	51 430	52 162	52 949	54 237	56 256	54 565
Pojkar	52 036	54 483	55 259	56 352	57 564	59 385	57 205
<b>Döda</b>	<b>91 710</b>	<b>91 177</b>	<b>91 729</b>	<b>91 449</b>	<b>90 080</b>	<b>90 487</b>	<b>89 938</b>
Kvinnor	46 922	47 000	47 759	47 389	46 388	46 587	46 344
Män	44 788	44 177	43 970	44 060	43 692	43 900	43 594
<b>Födelse-överskott</b>	<b>9 636</b>	<b>14 736</b>	<b>15 692</b>	<b>17 852</b>	<b>21 721</b>	<b>25 154</b>	<b>21 832</b>
Kvinnor	2 388	4 430	4 403	5 560	7 849	9 669	8 221
Män	7 248	10 306	11 289	12 292	13 872	15 485	13 611
<b>Invandrare</b>	<b>65 229</b>	<b>95 750</b>	<b>99 485</b>	<b>101 171</b>	<b>102 280</b>	<b>98 801</b>	<b>96 467</b>
Kvinnor	31 786	45 040	45 857	48 711	49 298	46 163	45 643
Män	33 443	50 710	53 628	52 460	52 982	52 638	50 824
<b>Utvandrare</b>	<b>38 118</b>	<b>44 908</b>	<b>45 418</b>	<b>45 294</b>	<b>39 240</b>	<b>48 853</b>	<b>51 179</b>
Kvinnor	17 880	21 002	20 995	20 555	17 972	22 158	23 344
Män	20 238	23 906	24 423	24 739	21 268	26 695	27 835
<b>Invandrings-överskott</b>	<b>27 111</b>	<b>50 842</b>	<b>54 067</b>	<b>55 877</b>	<b>63 040</b>	<b>49 948</b>	<b>45 288</b>
Kvinnor	13 906	24 038	24 862	28 156	31 326	24 005	22 299
Män	13 205	26 804	29 205	27 721	31 714	25 943	22 989

([http://www.scb.se/Pages/PressRelease\\_\\_\\_\\_329027.aspx](http://www.scb.se/Pages/PressRelease____329027.aspx))

## The parliamentary election 2010

In the 2010 election a party critical of Islam, Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats), won seats in the national Parliament with 5.7 percent of the votes.



(<http://www.val.se/val/val2010/slutresultat/R/rike/index.html>)

The entry of Sverigedemokraterna in Parliament sent deeply felt and troubling vibrations through Swedish society. The party, which has its roots in right-wing extremist groups, has lately gone through a process of transformation. Some say that

this is only cosmetic, but it succeeded in convincing more than 400,000 voters that its policies mirrored their view on reality.

Although xenophobic and anti-immigrant parties have grown stronger for some time in the whole of Europe, it is difficult to describe Sverigedemokraterna (SD) as just a Swedish version of this phenomenon. There are similarities between SD and Dansk folkeparti (the Danish People's Party), to mention one example, but there are also differences. SD is first and foremost an assimilationist party, a party with a dream of Sweden the way it once was, or how they believe it was, a party with the expressed goal that immigrants shall "become Swedes", in a manner that not even they themselves have clearly defined. On other issues, SD represents a value conservative and reactionary ideology with misogynist, anti-feminist and homophobic notions.

## Discussion topics

Swedish society has changed not only because of the parliamentary entry of Sverigedemokraterna. In December 2010 a suicide bomber detonated a load in central Stockholm, at the height of Christmas shopping, but failed in his intent to kill innocent people nearby. Because of a technical defect in his bomb, only the assassin himself was killed.

([http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/bomben-skulle-ha-dodat-40-personer\\_6684286.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/bomben-skulle-ha-dodat-40-personer_6684286.svd))

A few days later, the Security Police took into custody a group of young men who were on their way to Denmark. Their plan was to attack Jyllands-Posten, the newspaper that published the Mohammed caricatures, and murder as many of its employees as possible. The men were sentenced to long jail terms in 2012.

([http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/fyra-falls-for-terrorbrott-i-danmark\\_7252491.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/utrikes/fyra-falls-for-terrorbrott-i-danmark_7252491.svd))

In Malmö, a city with many non-European immigrants, a conflict took place which received international attention. A sports event, where some Israeli tennis players took part, resulted in demonstrations and the demonstrators tried to stop the game. A couple of manifestations in support of the state of Israel were also attacked and representatives of the Jewish community in Malmö expressed their concern because of the insecurity they experienced. Ilmar Reepalu, Malmö's leading politician, then stated something that made many react: he argued that Jews would feel safe in Malmö if they stopped supporting Israeli policies. The statement was seen as if the violence and the threats were authorized. Reepalu's statement was criticized by many and the Simon Wiesenthal Center included Malmö among the cities around the world where Jews are not protected against assault.

([www.skanskan.se/article/20100127/MALMO/701269748/1057](http://www.skanskan.se/article/20100127/MALMO/701269748/1057))

([sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=96&artikel=4983130](http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=96&artikel=4983130))

Safety issues are not the only ones that affect public opinion. In 2010 there was an intense discussion in Sweden about the so called "handshake case". The case was about a man, who by the employment service had been referred to a company where he would have an opportunity to get a practice employment. The man visited the business and met a female executive, but refused to shake her hand with reference to his religion. The company did not hire the man and the employment service withdrew his unemployment benefits with the motivation that he himself had made himself "not employable". The man contacted DO, the Swedish Anti-Discrimination

Ombudsman, and was granted a damage compensation of 50,000 SEK. The finding was intensely debated for several weeks in the media, where several writers asked what the verdict would have been if the man had refused to greet a black person or someone who was homosexual. The finding became a symbolic issue, that led to discussions about multiculturalism.

([http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/handskakningsdom-star-fast\\_4353889.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/handskakningsdom-star-fast_4353889.svd))

A doctoral law student at Uppsala University in 2011 defended his dissertation, which dealt with inheritance rights. His conclusions also led to much publicity. The student argued that when foreign citizens die the inheritance law in their home countries should apply. According to Swedish law, however, courts in Sweden are given an opportunity to conciliate the ruling if this should deviate too much from Swedish legal tradition. The student argued that this paragraph should not apply to deceased Muslims since Sharia regulations always give male heirs a larger portion of the inheritance than females. In this way Sharia would be incorporated into Swedish inheritance law.

([http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/rattsforakt-i-mangkulturens-namn\\_4197415.svd](http://www.svd.se/opinion/brannpunkt/rattsforakt-i-mangkulturens-namn_4197415.svd))

These occurrences are but a small section of what has been debated in Sweden lately. Essentially, it was the ideology of multiculturalism that was being discussed. While these Swedish discussions continued, leading European politicians such as Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron expressed criticism of multiculturalism and argued that it was out of date and dead.

([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKG76HF24\\_k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKG76HF24_k))

([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP2l\\_NnCLsk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP2l_NnCLsk))

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3xsnEzA8Fw>)

## **The attitude of Swedes**

The questioning of multiculturalism should not be mistaken for increased hostility toward foreigners. Mångfaldsbarometern (The Diversity Barometer) 2011, a report produced annually by the sociological institution at Uppsala University, provides interesting figures regarding public opinion in Sweden:

1. Many Swedes have positive experience from close contact and collaboration with persons with immigrant background. In 2006, 65.3 percent said that they had very or fairly good experiences, in 2007 the figure was 62.9 percent, and then the portion increases somewhat in 2008 and 2009 to 67.4 percent. In 2010 the figure was 66.9 percent. The portion with good experiences in 2011 was 67.3 percent.
2. Women and men hold approximately the same views when it comes to very good or fairly good experience from having persons with immigrant background as fellow workers or students. In 2011, the good experience portion was 67.2 percent for women and 67.0 percent among men. A slight equalization has occurred over time.
3. Persons living in big cities and smaller towns to a higher degree have very or fairly good experience from having immigrants as fellow workers or students. The portion with good experiences is smaller among those who live in smaller communities or in the countryside.
4. Younger Swedes hold a top position regarding good experiences. In 2011,

- 73.4 percent answered that they had very good or fairly good experiences.
5. A statement supported by many is "All immigrants who move here must be given the same social rights as the country's own population". The portion that totally or partly agrees was 71.5 percent in 2011.
  6. Among negative attitudes it is mainly the statement that "All foreigners who commit crimes in Sweden should be made to leave the country" which receives support from a definite majority. 60.3 percent agreed fully or partly in 2011. Here it is obvious that a majority both says that immigrants shall have the same social rights as everybody else and the same duties, that is to abide the laws of the country. In other words, immigrants are welcome, but there is one reservation. If the foreigners commit crimes, the doors of the country will be shut.
  7. If you calculate an index measuring global attitudes, the positive attitudes outnumber the negative, and this pattern is true for all the seven years, 2005-2011.
  8. Individuals with a higher education are more positive toward diversity. This is true also in 2011.
  9. Individuals with only elementary schooling are the ones most negative toward diversity, but this tendency is weakened in 2010-2011. The opinion gap between the highly educated and the lowskilled remains and there are statistically significant differences between different levels of schooling.
  10. Women are more positive toward diversity than men. For the gender variable, too, there are statistically significant differences in the period 2005-2011.
  11. Most Swedes are positive toward diversity, but there are also extreme, negative attitudes. The portion with such attitudes was estimated at 5.7 percent in 2010, but decreases to 4.9 percent in 2011.
  12. The extremely negative attitudes have decreased among individuals with only elementary schooling to 7.2 percent compared to 10.3 percent in 2010. Among those with only high school education there is a slight increase to 7.9 percent in 2011.
  13. When you calculate an index measuring attitudes toward diversity in relation to the job dimension, the result is positive and this is true of all seven years. Women are more positive than men (statistically significant differences).
  14. Most respondents are positive toward diversity, but great demands are also placed on immigrants. In 2011, 83.8 percent agreed with the statement "Immigrants have a duty to adjust to our country's customs".
  15. The opinion held by the greater majority of the Swedish population, that immigrants shall have the same social rights as others, is also evident when it comes to attitudes toward diversity in relation to work. The statement most strongly supported is "All immigrants should have the same working conditions as the Swedes", and this is true of every year (2005-2011).
  16. When you compare attitudes in relation to country of origin, those who were born outside Europe are shown to have less positive attitudes than those who were born in Sweden.
  17. The attitudes toward diversity in relation to religion are important. Among those with very negative attitudes, more men than women are

negative, those with a university education are less negative than those with less education, older Swedes are more negative than young and middle-aged Swedes, and individuals born in non-European countries are less negative than those born in Sweden or Europe.

18. An important question in relation to religion is this: "In several European countries there is criticism against the wearing of Muslim symbolic veils in public. What do you think about them being used in school or at work? Tick the box for every type of veil." The alternatives given were "totally acceptable", "quite acceptable", "uncertain", "quite unacceptable", "totally unacceptable" or "don't know". The answers show that the opposition in Sweden against the burqa and the niqab is compact, but less so than in 2010. This time, the question has also been asked about attitudes toward the use of Muslim veils in other public places than in school or at work, and opposition then decreases even more. Opposition against the chador being used in school or at work is weaker and decreases when you compare 2010 with 2011. The wearing of the chador in other public places is met with even less opposition. The hiyab and the shayla are seen by a majority as acceptable in school or at work, and the level of acceptance is even higher when it comes to other public places.
19. An index has been designed which measures how the Swedish population reacts to the different types of veiling. The result is that 20.1 percent of those who filled out the questionnaire in 2011 show extremely strong opposition against all types of Muslim veils.
20. A delicate and much discussed issue in Sweden has been the religious free schools. A relatively large portion, 56.3 percent, agreed with the statement "Religious free schools thwart integration". The question was first posed in 2006. In 2007 the portion that agreed was somewhat smaller, 54.5 percent, but still a majority of the Swedish population held a negative opinion about these schools. The negative attitudes were strengthened in 2008, 58.4 percent, but reduced to 54.8 percent the following year. The figure in 2010 was 55.0 percent and in 2011 it was 54.3 percent.
21. The attitudes toward diversity in relation to housing are important. A statement that the majority agrees with totally or in parts during the entire period, 2005-2011, is "a residential area with people from many different countries is more likely to have problems than areas where the majority comes from the same ethnic background". In 2011, 55.6 percent agreed. It is primarily men and individuals with only elementary schooling, who display negative attitudes to diversity in relation to housing.
22. The attitudes toward diversity in relation to culture are ambivalent. Most people responded by rejecting the statement "The immigrants are a threat to our culture". Only 25.5 percent supported that statement in 2011.
23. The respondents to a high degree agree that "Ethnic diversity develops our culture" (61.0 percent in 2011), while at the same time agreeing with the statement "The immigrants have a duty to adjust to our country's customs". One possible interpretation might be that there appears to be an open-mindedness about accepting other cultural elements, but that these need to be integrated into a common Swedish culture.
24. Diversity comprises of several different cultures and ethnic groups, something which becomes evident in the responses to the statement

”There are groups of immigrants who cannot integrate into our culture”. 64.7 percent agreed with that statement in 2011. One interpretation is that a majority of the Swedish population thinks that certain immigrant groups will not be able to integrate into Swedish society.

25. The attitudes in relation to culture can be summarized by categorizing along the lines of the response alternatives to these statements. What stands out is that in 2011 36.2 percent were very or quite negative, while a somewhat greater portion (38.5 percent) were uncertain and could not make up their minds.
26. When you summarize the attitude levels linked to the four dimensions that have been presented - jobs, religion, culture, and housing – you will find that the job dimension gives mostly positive attitudes. The other dimensions show more negative than positive attitudes and this is particularly true of the religious dimension.
27. According to this study, individuals belonging to the following nationalities and groups can be lumped together, depending on the perceived distance of the respondents: Iranians, Iraqis, Kurds, Somalis, Chinese, Turks, Roma, Chileans, Thai, Jews, Russians, Croatians, Serbs, Bosnians, Poles, and Greeks. The nationalities that are not included in the immigrant/alien status complex of problems are Norwegians, Englishmen, Finns, Germans, and Americans.
28. An index measuring the perceived distance to the nationalities and groups mentioned above, shows that there is a tendency among Swedes to view the first group from a significantly greater distance than the second group.
29. Hence, according to this study, there is a tendency to have positive attitudes toward diversity while, at the same time, keeping immigrants and certain nationalities at a greater distance. It is not self-evident that individuals who expose positive attitudes also feel close to other nationalities and cultures than their own.
  
30. Regardless of the positive attitudes, interaction with non-European immigrants becomes rare, especially among older people and individuals with only elementary schooling. The impression given is that the majority has very few contacts with immigrants besides the necessary, as in school or at work. Swedes in general do not socialize with non-European immigrants.
31. Which factors are important in order to explain attitudes toward ethnic diversity in Sweden? The most important factor is education: higher education leads to more positive attitudes. The other important factor is interaction with non-European immigrants – if interaction increases, so do the more positive attitudes. A good experience with fellow workers with an immigrant background leads to more positive attitudes. Women are more positive toward ethnic diversity than men. However, there are signs that women tend to become less positive than before. Age has some relevance, but it is less important than the other factors. The final factor is income – when the income increases, the positive attitudes decrease.

(The Institution of Sociology, Uppsala University, Mångfaldsbarometern 2011).

## 2.3 PUBLIC POLICY

The conclusions in Mångfaldsbarometern cannot surprise anyone who participates in the public debate in Sweden. There is a strong majority that is in favour of a multicultural society and sees its benefits. But there is also a large segment of the population, which is opposed to *multiculturalism* as a way of organizing the multicultural society. Swedes believe that everyone living in Sweden should abide by the same laws, have the same rights and carry the same duties.

In some countries a concept is used that in French is known as "l'état profond", "the deep state" –it is a kind of bureaucratic mass that will implement the policies decided by the government and the parliament. This group, however, tends to follow its own agenda and its own ideology. In a democracy, governments are exchanged while the bureaucracy remains. In terms of HRV and the entire complex of problems that can be tied to that issue, it is possible to argue that cabinet minister Nyamko Sabuni since 2006 has shaped a policy aimed at counteracting HRV and forced marriages. At the same time, the authorities that should implement Sabuni's policy have not always followed the basic ideas and the concrete instructions from the minister. The discrepancy between government policies and their implementation through different authorities and agencies is creating a vacuum, which weakens the power of the different interventions.

One example is an educational course arranged in Helsingborg in 2011 by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, titled "Married against one's will". The participants, who paid a hefty fee to learn about forced marriages, were professionals with experience from this complex of problems. After the course, two groups of participants sent letters both to the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Education expressing their dissatisfaction with the content. One group writes:

*"It transpired that Ungdomsstyrelsen and Högskolan have collaborated and as we understand it, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is very much satisfied with the way Kista Folk High School works against the honour problems, and that is encouraging. It transpired during the day that the Koran supports girls in their choice of partner and that every form of coercion is prohibited. However, this became contradictory when Habib, who is both the principal and an imam, interpreted this verse from the Koran. It led to more confusion as the girl, according to Habib, may be able to decide if 'she has entered puberty and if she has reached mental maturity'. According to his explanation one can interpret this as if one of the requirements above is not met, then the girl can not decide and then others will decide for her."*

Another group participating in the same course expressed it like this:

***”When the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs chooses to bring in an imam and principal for a confessional school as a lecturer, a person who himself argues that parents have the right to restrict their children’s choice of marriage partner and that homosexuals shall not have the same rights as heterosexuals, then we feel insulted both on our own behalf and on behalf of all the girls, women and young men whom we have had the honour of assisting in their struggle for their human rights and to be able to live a life of their own choosing.”***

(Both letters appear as annex in this report).

There are innumerable examples of a clash of interests between the decisions taken by the government and the parliament and the implementation of these by the answerable authorities.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has refused to define honour related violence and repression in its new handbook for the social services about women exposed to violence and children who have witnessed violence. They argue that there is not any established definition. But already in the government’s plan of action from 2007, ”Action plan to combat men’s violence against women, honour related violence, and violence in same-sex relationships”, the concept was defined. The writing has been produced by the cabinet office, which means that a very large number of public officials have been involved in reviewing the text. A democratically elected government has then endorsed it before a democratically elected parliament reviewed and signed it. Yet, the National Board of Health and Welfare in its material (p. 21) argues that there does not exist any recognized definition of HRV in Sweden. (<http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2011/2011-6-9> )

Another example can be found in ”Female circumcision/genital mutilation in Sweden – a knowledge and research overview”. Here, Nationellt Centrum för Kvinnofrid (NCK, the National Centre for Women’s Integrity) wants to introduce the concept of *female circumcision* (the legislation from 1982, which bans the assault, uses the term ”genital mutilation” (SFS nr: 1982:316). On p. 28, the best interest of the child is discussed: ”After the procedure the child does not run any risk of new operations and with prosecution of both or any of her parents comes a *risk that the family is disrupted.*” NCK also argues that it is prejudiced when the health services routinely perform caesarean section on genitally mutilated women. What these researchers may not reflect over is that Swedish health care perhaps does not see it as its duty to cut up women and patch them together afterwards, and thus contributing to the genital mutilation. (NCK-report 2011:01 p. 28).

NCK has also produced a research overview about HRV, which excludes the quantitative research in this field done by Stockholm University and concentrates on qualitative research. The report is a biased account since the only researcher who has engaged in quantitative research, Astrid Schlytter, has been excluded. What is promoted by NCK is the intersectional perspective, which in this report is transformed into the kind of racism that Swedish authorities are said to stand for. The report lets on that Swedish society oppresses men with foreign background, but strengthens women and children. This, according to the report, makes the men oppressive against women and children.

Since 2006, the government has taken decisions about a large number of

interventions to counteract HRV and forced marriages. In the government writing 2009/10:229 a large number of interventions related to the fight against HRV are specified. An important part of government policy in this field is the inquiry led by the Justice of the Supreme Court Göran Lambertz, whose mandate was to propose changes in the legislation in order to criminalize forced marriages. The inquiry presented its conclusions in May 2012.

”The report contains a number of proposals on how protection against child marriages, forced marriages and other types of marriages against someone’s will can be strengthened. These are some of the proposals:

- The possibility for minors to apply for exemption in order to marry is abolished.
- Child marriages are criminalized. Criminal responsibility lies with the individual who induces a child to marry or who initiates or arranges a child marriage. Certain marriage-like relations, that are not legally valid, are also included (so called informal marriages).
- A special penalty regulation concerning forced marriages is initiated. The informal marriages are included here as well.
- A national unit, a so called competence team, is created to lead, coordinate and support the work against forced marriages and child marriages as well as against honour related violence and repression. The competence team will initially be placed at the Östergötland County Administrative Board, which has extensive experience from similar work.
- The National Board for Health and Welfare is commissioned to undertake a supervision project concerning forced marriages and child marriages at the local social services.
- Higher demands will be placed on faith communities that want to arrange marriage services and on individuals who want to be appointed to officiate at weddings within a religious community. To obtain a permit it is a requirement that faith communities and the individuals who officiate do not carry out any religious ”forced weddings” or ”child weddings”.
- The Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities must within its regular activities engage in a dialogue with the faith communities and the individuals appointed to officiate at weddings about child marriages and marriages against a person’s own will.
- A recommended method for work with families in emergency situations shall be prepared.
- The inquiry has considered other changes, including making the regulations concerning recognition of foreign marriages more stringent. A change in these regulations is not proposed. Neither does the inquiry propose that it

should be made possible to withhold the reasons for not issuing residence permits, even though this in some cases could be of great help to exposed individuals”.

SOU (2012:35)

The cabinet minister Nyamko Sabuni in January 2012 initiated an inquiry into how a special unit within the police could combat forced marriages. The model for this unit is the Forced Marriage Unit in the UK, a section within the British police force. The government has also produced a new and comprehensive plan, which includes fifteen measures aimed at counteracting forced marriages:

**STEP 1:** The government has produced information aimed at those who are worried that they will become married against their will in another country. There is also information about legislation concerning marriages on the government website.

**STEP 2:** The government commissioned the County Administrative Board of Östergötland to be responsible for the national circulation of the project ”Your rights – a project about the rights of children and youth” .

**STEP 3:** The government has commissioned the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs to produce and disseminate information that marriage against a person’s will is not compatible with Swedish public law and about which authorities children and young people can turn to in order to seek support and help. ”Right to choose – civic information to counteract and prevent that young people are married against their will” (Ungdomsstyrelsens skrifter 2010:12).

**STEP 4:** The government has commissioned the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs to implement education for the staff concerned within government, municipal and private sector organizations. This education shall provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect upon how they can work to counteract and prevent that young people are married against their will.

**STEP 5:** The government has commissioned the National Centre for Knowledge on Men’s Violence Against Women (NCK) at Uppsala University to produce and disseminate a guide with advice and support for health care staff.

**STEP 6:** Social studies are introduced following the new legislation (2010:197) about measures for establishment of certain newly arrived immigrants as a compulsory part of the establishing plan for the newly arrived. From December 1 2010, every municipality is obliged to offer newly arrived immigrants at least 60 hours of civics.

**STEP 7:** The government has commissioned the County Administrative Board of Östergötland to produce a guide for support to and rehabilitation of youth, who have been placed in protected housing, family homes or other institutions because they run

the risk of being married against their will or have been married against their own will.

**STEP 8:** The government has commissioned the National Board for Health and Welfare to, with existing knowledge as the starting point, analyze what needs exist in order to develop the quality of the work of the social services and the health services with victims of honour related violence and repression, including children and youth who are made to marry against their will.

**STEP 9:** The government has commissioned the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs to be the convener for a network of government authorities. The network shall coordinate interventions and information.

**STEP 10:** The government has assigned to a special investigator the task of obtaining further knowledge about forced marriages and child marriages and, based on this knowledge, suggesting measures to prevent such marriages. The investigator shall also produce an overview of the relevant legislation.

**STEP 11:** The government has assigned a special investigator to chart and analyze the work with exposed children in pre-schools, schools, and school childcare. "See, interpret and act – everybody's right to equal education" (SOU 2010:95).

**STEP 12:** The government has commissioned the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs to produce a mapping of different actors in public and private sector organizations as well as in faith communities and non-profit organizations working with youth, who already work or could work to counteract and prevent that young people risk being married against their will. "My own free will – a mapping of preventive work and methods to counteract and prevent that youth are married against their will" (Ungdomsstyrelsens skrifter 2010:15).

**STEP 13:** The government has commissioned the Swedish Migration Board to keep statistics of, among other things, marriages by authorization and child marriages, which have laid the foundation for the approval of residence permits or the rejection of applications for residence permits during the period September 1 2010 to August 31 2011.

**STEP 14:** The government has commissioned the Swedish Tax Agency to keep statistics of, among other things, the number of child marriages during the period September 1 2010 to August 31 2011.

**STEP 15:** It is the intention of the government to investigate the incidence of traditional or wedding-like ceremonies, that do not constitute marriage in a legal sense, such as betrothal, and the incidence of dowry or other requirements.

(<http://regeringen.se/content/1/c6/16/07/65/cfb6cd94.pdf>)

The Swedish government has produced information aimed at those who are worried about being married against their will abroad.

The criticism directed at the implementation of the authorities of government policy

concerning HRV has resulted in some concrete measures taken. One is the government decision December 15 2011 to hand over to the Östergötland County Administrative Board a national commission to strengthen the interventions against honour related violence and repression as well as the work to counteract and prevent that young people are married against their will. The County Administrative Board thus takes on the commission previously held by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. The commission means that the Östergötland County Administrative Board shall produce information to young people, provide education for different staff groups working with youth, convene a network of government organizations, implement the information campaign "Your rights", and develop and disseminate a guide for support and rehabilitation.

(<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/14056/a/182791>)

## 2.4 DEVELOPMENT

### From the perspective of ALMAeuropa

When we, in 2001, began our work with HRV within the framework of Fryshuset, we focused exclusively on women as victims. It was not until 2003 that we developed the first ideas for working with young men as well. This mirrored our growing awareness of the fact that young men were important in preventive work, but also constitute a group that suffers from HRV, albeit differently than women. In 2008 ALMAeuropa received funding from the County Administrative Board in Stockholm to carry out the first series of interviews with LGBT youth who live under honour norms. This way we identified a third group, that is exposed to the mechanisms characterizing HRV.

### The fight against HRV becomes institutionalized

Another kind of change that has occurred since 2001 is that it is no longer the non-profit organizations that shoulder the heaviest burden when it comes to dealing with issues of honour repression in Sweden. After the murder of Fadime Sahindal in 2002, the government and the parliament began to acquire knowledge and tools to confront the growing challenge of HRV. No longer will ethnically based women's organizations exclusively take care of the victims, write opinion pieces, and explain the phenomenon. The government, especially since 2006, has allocated substantial resources to realize education for professionals in the public sector and to support methods development in this field.

When Fadime Sahindal contacted the police for help in the late 1990s, she was met with a total lack of knowledge about the problems that she was exposed to. Nowadays it is highly unlikely that you will encounter the same lack of knowledge among police officers, teachers, counsellors or social workers. Few individuals

within these groups of professionals have missed the information and knowledge provided at numerous conferences and educational courses dealing with the topic of HRV. However, this in no way means that the help and support that the victims need are of the kind of quality and quantity required to meet the actual demands. But it is possible to catch a tendency where more authorities without a doubt have improved their ability to understand and to act on the complex of problems.

# 3

## SUCCESS FACTORS AND GOOD

### EXAMPLES

#### 3.1 PROGRESS REPORT

"What is needed to successfully combat honour related violence, forced marriages and/or abandoning?" That is the question that the partners in the Flying Team project posed to different grassroots organizations and NGOs in Turkey, Cyprus, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. Here we will show what the Swedish organizations responded. (A presentation of interviewee organizations can be found in chapter 1.) We begin this chapter with a progress report in the form of a summary of the situation in Sweden as it was described by the organizations that we interviewed:

- The fight against HRV in Sweden is made more difficult by the lack of a predictable funding system. The different requirements linked to funding of activities are contradictory. The requirement of a professional job does not sit well with the required "idealism". You either get the idealistic, which is often characterized by intense but temporary involvement, or you become professional in your work against HRV. The lack of stable funding with long-term planning is the major obstacle, which all the interviewees pointed out.
- The funding from the authorities is usually directed to projects. The need to continuously create new projects in order to carry out the work has two negative consequences. On one hand, an enormous amount of energy goes into writing descriptions of new projects, and to account for and administer them. On the other, the project culture creates an artificial competition between the different non-profit organizations seeking funds from the same authority. The project culture also means that the resources in effect are administered by a relatively small group of officials with a disproportionately strong influencing power.
- Several of the interviewee organizations identify a clear contradiction between the agenda set by the government and the parliament and the

concrete decisions actually taken by the authorities, who are commissioned to implement government policy. Sometimes a clear discrepancy can be noticed between government intentions and the implementations of the authorities concerned.

- Since several years, the County Administrative Board of Östergötland holds a role as the national coordinator for issues concerning HRV. The resources allocated through Östergötland have traditionally been small compared to the increasing demands created by HRV in the whole of Sweden. In 2011, the Östergötland County Administrative Board published a guide titled "Dare to make a difference", which is aimed at individuals who in their professional capacities encounter victims of HRV. "Dare to make a difference" does make a difference. The material is the first of its kind in Sweden and it presents a complete picture of the legal situation and the alternatives available to bring about an improvement for those exposed.
- SOU 2012:35, titled "Strengthened protection against forced marriages and child marriages", is an important milestone in the fight against HRV in Sweden. The inquiry obtained opinions from, among others, the non-profit organizations that have been interviewed for this report. The quality and scope of the inquiry will definitely affect the work against HRV for a long time, not only when it leads to new legislation. The inquiry itself and its conclusions already are a source of knowledge and an important inspiration. Over the past few years, Swedish authorities have produced three enlightening and well-researched reports: "Married against one's own will" (Ungdomsstyrelsen), "Strengthened protection against forced marriages and child marriages" (Statens Offentliga Utredningar) and "Dare to make a difference" (Länsstyrelsen Östergötland).

## 3.2 SUCCESS FACTORS

Most of the organizations that we interviewed mention the following factors as contributing to the positive development of their activities:

- That the activities reflect a concrete demand and are not based on ideological or political assumptions.
- That the activities succeed in involving several actors, such as the police, youth welfare centres, counsellors, and different non-profit organizations.
- That the activities are well-organized, with thorough accounts and follow-ups. Good evaluations are a great asset if you want to avoid repeating mistakes.
- That the staff involved in the activities have substantial knowledge about, insight into and commitment concerning the HRV complex of problems.
- Distinct standpoints. Victims of HRV are helped by an open admission of the repression that has afflicted them.
- Avoiding unnecessary conflicts that often tend to exist between different

non-profit organizations.

- Remembering that every network and collaboration that has been created must be maintained and renewed. People move, retire or get new positions while the need for coordination and cooperation remains.
- Stable funding provides continuity and peace and quiet so that you can work, something that counteracts the sense of burnout which sometimes characterizes activities based on the work of real enthusiasts.

### 3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The interviewee non-profit organizations suggest the following measures and approaches for a more successful intervention against HRV, forced marriages and abandonment:

- Criminalization of all forms of forced marriages and child marriages.
- No more public funding of activities that do not promote gender equality, democracy and the right to one's own sexuality and gender expression. It is wrong for society to fund reactionary organizations in the hope of influencing them.
- All children are everybody's children, all children should have access to a description of reality that fosters autonomous individuals.
- Stable funding for organizations that demonstrably work for human rights.
- Introduce LGBT perspectives as a requirement for all funding from all municipalities and authorities.
- Introduce the requirement that all staff working for authorities shall be educated about the different shapes of racism: the vulgar racism, which discriminates based on looks or origin, but also what we call new racism, i.e. that a person who is regarded as "immigrant" with reference to culture or religion gets treated differently from a person regarded as "native".
- Better collaboration between non-profit organizations, the police and the social agencies.
- HRV should be considered an aggravating circumstance, which should lead to longer sentencing when the crime is committed in the name of honour.
- Police education concerning risk assessment must be improved.
- Gender segregation should be outlawed (public swimmingpools, sports centres and so forth).
- The positive development in the target group's countries of origin should be utilized in a better way. Provide support for organizations that work against HRV in those regions.
- The legislation concerning genital mutilation should become gender neutral.

### 3.4 GOOD EXAMPLES

Below, two examples are presented of activities in Sweden, which by the project "Flying Team against Violence" have been deemed successful and which have found new tools and methods that in a substantial way contribute to the methods development in the fight against HRV, forced marriages and abandonment.

#### LGBT and honour

Since 2010 ALMAeuropa and RFSL Ungdom run the joint project "LGBT and honour", which is funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund and the County Administrative Board of Östergötland. We could see that young LGBT persons are a group that is severely afflicted by honour related violence, but that the majority of measures taken within this field focus on young, presumably heterosexual, women. Hence, we saw a great need to also emphasize the vulnerability of LGBT persons.

The aim of the project is to increase knowledge about young LGBT persons who are exposed to honour related violence, to disseminate this knowledge to staff in schools, leisure activities, social services and other relevant actors, and to offer concrete support to the target group (young LGBT persons exposed to honour related violence). During the first project period we did interviews with young people from the target group, but also with professionals (counsellors, social workers, and others) who encounter the target group in their daily work.

Finding youth who were willing to participate in interviews was difficult in itself, even when their total anonymity was guaranteed. An ad campaign was placed on the [www.qx.se](http://www.qx.se) website, a community for LGBT persons. Questions were asked about family repression with reference to reputation or honour. 490 persons responded to the questionnaire that was linked to the ad, but only a few agreed to take part in a deeper interview. In 2001, the book "LGBT and Honour – an interview study of young LGBT persons living in families with honour norms" was published. The book includes 17 deep-going interviews. Most of the interviewees have a background in the Middle East or in the Balkan. A few came from an evangelical Free Church background. The analysis of the interviews shows the tremendous exposure with which the target group is living. One of our conclusions was that the interviewees did not have access to the help and support they needed.

During the autumn of 2011 we put up the website [www.hbtheder.se](http://www.hbtheder.se), where young people can seek support via chat and email. For this page we have engaged seven mentors, who have experience from working with these issues and in some cases also personal experience. The task of the mentors is to listen, give support and, if need be, arrange further contact with for instance the social services or other non-profit organizations. They shall also be able to answer questions about what will happen

after a police report or during an investigation by the social services. In our work with the website we collaborate with the RFSL crime victim aid. The project has also published the booklet "LGBT and Honour – advice for professionals", which can be ordered for free from our respective organizations and which can also be downloaded as pdf.

Another part of the project deals with education, which is ongoing at this very moment and aimed at professionals. The education gives the participants an opportunity to learn about the reality of these young people, and hopefully this will have the result that more police officers, teachers and counsellors adopt new ways of helping the exposed in the target group. One of the most important conclusions in the interview study is that authorities and schools have extremely limited, and not enough, knowledge when it comes to offering support and help when LGBT youth exposed to HRV need it.

The project "LGBT and honour" has gotten a lot of attention since it focuses on a group, that has not before been noticed in the public debate about HRV. One prerequisite for the success of the project has been the successful collaboration between RFSL Ungdom, a national organization with long experience with LGBT issues in youth environments, and ALMAeuropa, with its long experience with the development of methods in the HRV field.

## **Höganäs kvinnojour/Tjejjour (Women's aid group)**

Höganäs, a town in southern Sweden, has a women's aid group that each year encounters between 100 and 400 individuals who have been exposed to HRV. The activities are funded by the County Administrative Board of Skåne.

A few years ago the members of the aid group realized that they needed more knowledge about HRV in order to meet the individuals who contacted them for help. They were used to dealing with patriarchal violence or violence against women, but they now ran into a phenomenon that required specific knowledge. The women's aid group contacted Maria Hagberg, a knowledgeable and committed person who was also the president of Nätverket mot hedersrelaterat våld (the Network against honour related violence), to have her elevate the competence of the aid group staff in the HRV field.

As the first women's aid group in the country, the group in Höganäs also offers help to men, in the form of protected housing, dialogue support, and assistance in contacts with authorities. The standpoints of the aid group has led the way for other groups who are now accepting men, in Varberg, Ronneby and Stockholm and other places. The men who seek protection have sometimes refused to control their sisters or other family members, sometimes refused to be married away, and some of them are LGBT persons.

Höganäs kvinnojour argues that society long has turned a blind eye to HRV and that preventive work in schools and in youth environments is extremely important in order to create changes in attitudes. It is not enough to work actively with only the most severe cases. At the moment, the women's aid group runs three projects: theme days, protected housing for young men, and protected housing for victims of

violence in close relationships. It is an interesting contribution to the development of methods that the aid group argues that it is not necessary to have a similar cultural background as the target group to achieve good results when working with victims of HRV. The credibility, professionalism and commitment of the women's aid group are not based on cultural identity but on laborious interest and work.

# 4

## CLOSING DISCUSSION

It is impossible to discuss interventions against HRV, forced marriages and abandoning without a thorough discussion about the ideological climate, that characterizes the society that will implement the measures. Sweden has since the murder of Fadime Sahindal been characterized by a a poisoned discussion between different groups that have tried to have their own explanation of the phenomenon accepted. Today, however, it is an established truth that HRV is a specific type of repression, which cannot be counteracted with the same methods as patriarchal violence.

When this report was written, there were incidents that in some cases have been clear manifestations of HRV (honour killings, inexplicable falls from balconies), but there were also others with a suggested link to honour norms. Jian in Katrineholm and Maria in Landskrona can be seen as "classic" honour killings, but several other deaths and serious incidents during 2012 have without the shadow of a doubt demonstrated that HRV is one of Sweden's greatest challenges. The new national coordinator against violence in close relationships, former County Chief Commissioner Carin Götblad, identifies HRV as "Sweden's biggest public health problem."

"When Carin Götblad, former Chief Commissioner in Stockholm, on April 25 is given the task as national coordinator against violence in close relationships the topic of honour violence becomes central. Two days have passed since the murder in Landskrona and the questions from the media mostly circle around honour violence. Men's general violence against women is absent.

A major part of Götblad's presentation at the press conference in the government's

Cabinet Office deals with honour violence. Surrounded by three cabinet ministers – minister of justice Beatrice Ask, minister for gender equality Nyamko Sabuni and minister for children and public care Maria Larsson – she says:

– We must not show undue consideration for culture or religion. This we can't afford. We must be bolder. We must find the common denominators in these crimes without stigmatizing.

Carin Götblad says that she particularly looks forward to engaging in the issues of child abuse and honour related violence. "We must demonstrate that in this country human rights and everybody's equal worth prevail." (Dagens Nyheter, 2012-05-22)

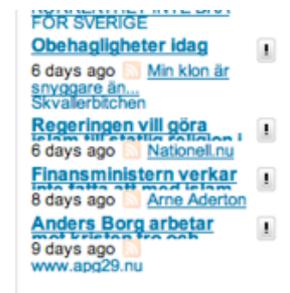
Without a doubt, HRV is a serious problem in Sweden and attention is paid to it in politics, media coverage and everyday conversations. Lately, however, there has been a tendency to discuss immigration and its positive and negative consequences rather than the phenomenon of HRV itself. It is not insignificant in this context that the largest immigrant groups that have arrived in Sweden over the past few years are from regions in the world where HRV has a devastating effect on people's lives. But it is other aspects of immigration that are problemized. Minister of finance Anders Borg participated in a discussion arranged by Humanisterna during the political summit week at Almedalen. He discussed different proposals to improve integration. Many reacted against Borg's statement regarding "the women with a Middle East background": Borg claimed that 90 percent of them lack employment.

### "Huvudduk får inte hindra"

Han var tydligt oroad över att stora invandrargrupper från Somalia, Irak, Eritrea och Afghanistan inte skulle känna sig delaktiga i Sverige. Därför menade han att det är mycket viktigt att inte stöta bort dem, även om de kanske har en annan syn på jämställdhet än den som är dominerande i Sverige. Han ansåg till exempel att huvudduk inte ska få hindra flickor från att delta i skolan.

90 procent av kvinnorna med bakgrund i Mellanöstern är inte sysselsatta, det är ett stort jämställdhetsproblem.

- Vad ska vi göra åt det? Det första måste vara att flickorna får en sådan utbildning att de kommer in på arbetsmarknaden, sa han.



(Dagen 2012-07-06) The entire discussion is on Humanisterna's website (<http://bambuser.com/v/2802425>)

Borg's statement signifies a removal of the discussion from HRV and its consequences in Swedish society to a discussion about Swedish welfare. This discussion, about the costs of immigration and employment or the lack of it, opens the door to a new phase when it comes to the attitude of the Swedish society toward honour related violence: we are probably entering a new era when the relevance of the topic will be questioned anew and the topic will be pushed outside the focus of the discussion, just as it was before the murder of Fadime Sahindal.

If the new tendencies, to focus on the economic aspects linked to immigration, will be a lasting phenomenon, no one knows. But it is obvious that the individuals who are victims of HRV in Sweden will not find support in such a development.

# 5

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# 6

## ANNEX

### 6.1 PROJECT TEAM

The project “Flying Team against Violence – Combating Honour Related Violence and Forced Marriages” is funded by the Daphne III programme, a part of the European Commission, and coordinated by the MOVISIE foundation, the Netherlands, in collaboration with:

- ALMAeuropa (Sweden)
- Bağımsız Kadın Derneği (Autonomous Women’s Association) (Turkey)
- Welsaen Foundation (the Netherlands)
- Kezban Foundation (the Netherlands)
- Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies MIGS (Cyprus)
- Papatya /Türkisch-Deutscher Frauenverein (Germany)

### 6.2 QUESTION TEMPLATE EUROPEAN PROJECT FLYING TEAM AGAINST VIOLENCE

#### *Combating Honour Related Violence and Forced Marriages*

#### Contact

Name of the organization	
--------------------------	--

Address	
Telephone number	
E-mail address	
Function within the organization	

## Introduction

The following questions will be about honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning. There will be questions about the definitions of these issues, your organization, your projects, governmental policy, future plans and wishes and needs. In this research we include female victims as well as male victims, perpetrators, family and community structures.

### Question 1. Reconnaissance

1.1	Which problems do you come across in your work/organization? Honour related violence Forced marriages Abandoning	
1.2	If you come across all three, which of the three problems do you face most?	
1.3	Do you think one of these problems is the most important? If yes, which of these and why? If no, why is this not the case?	

**Question 2 to 4 will be about the definitions of, the forms of and the most common reasons for honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning. These questions will function as background information for this research.**

### Question 2. Honour related violence

For honour related violence we propose to use the following definition:  
*“Any form of physical or mental violence, in the form of custody, mistreatment, isolation, humiliation, repudiation, murder or suicide, committed out of a collective mentality, in response to a (threat of) violation of the honour of a man or a women, and therefore that of his or her family, of which the outside world is aware of or may become aware of.”*

For honour we propose to use the following definition:  
*“Honour reflects the masculinity and femininity of a family. The sexuality of the*

<p>women is dominance for the masculinity and femininity. A ‘good girl’ keeps her virginity until she is married and then she has to give birth. A ‘good man’ is a guardian of the sexuality of the women in his family. A ‘good man’ also keeps his honesty, reliability, decisiveness, feeling of responsibility. Having a good education, job or material status increases the level of honour. When one person in a family does not behave according the rules to be a good man or woman, the honour of the whole family can be at risk.”</p>	
2.1	Does the definition of honour related violence match the problems you come across in your work/organization? When this is not the case, please give a completion of the definition.
2.2	Does the definition of honour match the opinions about the definition of honour in your work/organization? When this is not the case, please give a completion of the definition.
2.3	Which forms of honour related violence do you see in your work/organization?
2.4	What are the three most common reasons you see for honour related violence, based on your own experience? For example: A girl has had sexual intercourse outside a marriage.

### Question 3. Forced marriages

<p>For forced marriages we propose to use the following definition: “A marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress by means of <i>social and/or physical pressure or physical and/or mental abuse</i> is a factor”</p>	
3.1	Does this definition match the problems you come across in your organization? When this is not the case, please give a completion of the definition.
3.2	Which forms of forced marriages do you see in your work/organization?
3.3	What are the three most common reasons you see for a forced marriage, based on your own experience? For example: arranged marriages agreed at birth.

## Question 4. Abandoning

For abandoning we propose to use the following definition:		
<i>“The family of the girl/woman of which the honour has been violated or threatened to be violated, (or because of educational or marital problems), abandons or sends the man/boy//woman/girl back to the country of origin where this person lives in the care of the grandparents or other relatives or is left alone without family to turn to.”</i>		
4.1	Does this definition match the problems you come across in your organization? When this is not the case, please give a completion of the definition.	
4.2	Which forms of abandoning do you see in your work/organization?	
4.3	What are the three most common reasons you see for abandoning, based on your own experience? For example: A girl violated the family honour because she is not a virgin anymore.	

## Question 5. Projects

In this question we are focusing on your projects and good practices in your country.		
5.1	Who is the initiator of your projects?	
5.2	How were these projects started?	
5.3	Are there any good practices from your organization dealing with the prevention of these problems in your country?	Use the matrix for good practices nr. 5.3. If you have more than one good practice please copy the matrix.
5.4	What are the basic ideas of these good practices? What are the mainlines of these good practices?	
5.5	What are the main goals your organizations wants to achieve concerning these issues?	
5.6	What are your minimum goals?	
5.7	What methods does your organization use to measure the results of the project?	

## Question 6. Organization

In this question we would like to focus on your organization structure and financing.		
6.1	How many people are working within your organization?	
6.2	Number of volunteers: Number of paid employees:	
6.3	How is your organization financed?	
6.4	To whom is your organization accountable?	
6.5	If you get support from the government, is this: local, regional or national government?	
6.6	How does the government support your organisation? For example: money, projects etc.	
6.7	Do you have contact with the local, regional or national authorities? If so, in what way do you have contact and what are your experiences?	
6.8	Does your organization cooperate with local, regional or national authorities? If so, in what way and with which authority organization?	
6.9	Does your organization cooperate with other grass-root organizations or NGOs? If so, which are they and how does your organization cooperate with them?	
6.10	Does your government (local, regional or national), contact you for professional advice concerning honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning?	
6.11	Does your organization contact the government (local, regional or national) for information and professional advice for projects concerning the prevention of honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning?	

## Question 7. Governmental policy

In this question we would like to focus on the government of your country, their

political position and policy.		
7.1	How would you describe the policy towards migrants and refugees?	
7.2	Does your government have a policy concerning honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning? If so, please explain what the policy is for each issue. Please include: Legislation Prevention and education Research Shelters Professional help Other	
7.3	Does your government have a policy concerning domestic violence?	
7.4	When your government has a policy concerning honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning as well as a policy concerning domestic violence, could you please explain the differences between these policies?	
7.5	If your government has a policy concerning honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning, what are the positive effects of the policy for the projects of your organization? If the government only has a policy concerning domestic violence, please answer this question for the policy concerning domestic violence.	
7.6	If your government has a policy concerning honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning, what are the negative effects of the policy for the projects of your organization? If the government only has a policy concerning domestic violence, please answer this question for the policy concerning domestic violence.	
7.7	What are the positive sides of your governments policy, regarding the topics:	

	<p>Legislation Prevention and education Research Discussion and debate around the topics honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning Measures taking for the prevention and repression of honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning Other</p>	
7.8	<p>What are the negative sides of your governments policy, regarding the topics: Legislation Prevention and education Research Discussion and debate around the topics honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning Measures taking for the prevention and repression of honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning Other</p>	
7.9	<p>What is your overall opinion about the policy concerning honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning? Please answer this question by using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very bad and 5 is very good. Please give an explanation of your answer.</p>	
7.10	<p>Are there factors indicating that the policy on local, regional or national level is going to be changed? If so, in what way?</p>	
7.11	<p>What does your organization want to change in the policy of the government? And why?</p>	

### Question 8. Future plans

<p>In this question we would like to get a point of view about the future of your organization.</p>		
8.1	<p>Do you already have plans for future projects concerning prevention of these issues?</p>	

8.2	Will there be a change in method for these projects? Please explain when this is the case, what these changes will be and why. When this is not the case, please explain why.	
8.3	Will your organization continue her work concerning the prevention of honour related violence, forced marriages and abandoning? If this is not the case please explain why. If your organization does continue her work, in what ways will your organization do this?	

### Question 9. Wishes and needs

In this question we would like you to give your opinion about the wishes and needs for the future, in order to improve the work.		
9.1	What does your organization want to change in the cooperation between the different actors in the prevention of honour related violence or forced marriages or abandoning? And why?	
9.2	What resources does your organization need to do their work better?	
9.3	What does your organization need to do their work better other than resources? Please think of your own organization, the local, regional or national government, other organizations?	
9.4	How does your organization think that these issues are going to evolve in your country? Why do you think that?	
9.5	When you have further comments, tips or recommendations please note these here.	

### Good practices

Matrix good practices 5.3		
1.	Title of the good practice	
2.	Which problems are being dealt	

	with?	
3.	Goals: describe the main goals of the good practice	
4.	What was the main idea/plan behind this good practice? For example: earlier experience, a book, theory etc.	
5.	Target Group?	
6.	Method	
7.	Who is implementing this good practice? (organisation and contact).	
8.	Available material (description, website etc.)	
9.	How widely spread is this good practice used in your country?	
10.	What are the results, outcomes, experiences of this good practice? Please mention the source(s).	
11.	Are there effect studies? If so, please mention the source(s).	
12.	What are the success factors?	
13.	What are the negative factors?	
14.	Does your organization have suggestions for follow-up projects?	

## 6.3 LETTER 1 TO THE SWEDISH NATIONAL BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS, 2011

*Hello,*

*We, who have participated in the National Board for Youth Affairs course "Married against one's will" in Helsingborg, would hereby like to voice our opinions and our dissatisfaction. The criticism is directed at one lecture and its content.*

*According to the invitation to the course we will, as participants, be able to enter deeply into the complex of problems and the statistics provided by the Board. The purpose is that we all in our respective jobs will make use of the knowledge and become better at counteracting and preventing forced marriages and arranged marriages.*

*We come from different professional backgrounds such as social work administrators, preventive and leisure units, women's aid groups, crime victim aid groups, the police, juvenile receptions, schools and non-profit organizations. As paying participants in this course we took time off from our regular duties and therefore expected a professional setup and information, since for many of us who*

*were present the complex of problems that was addressed is something we encounter and must deal with in our daily work.*

*During the second part of the course, which took place in September, we had some fantastic lecturers such as Juno Blom. But on the final day of the course we had four shorter lectures that were tied together. They were representatives of the Kista Folk High School, including the principal Abdulkader Habib and the president, Sonia Shereyfa.*

*It transpired that Ungdomsstyrelsen and Högskolan have collaborated and as we understand it, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is very much satisfied with the way Kista Folk High School works against the honour problems, and that is encouraging. It transpired during the day that the Koran supports girls in their choice of partner and that every form of coercion is prohibited. However, this became contradictory when Habib, who is both the principal and an imam, interpreted this verse from the Koran. It led to more confusion as the girl, according to Habib, may be able to decide if 'she has entered puberty and if she has reached mental maturity'. According to his explanation one can interpret this as if one of the requirements above is not met, then the girl can not decide and then others will decide for her.*

*As he was asked about LGBT persons and about same-sex marriages, one of the groups most seriously exposed to honour related violence, it was very hurtful to realize that Habib does not give support to the individuals in these groups, which we find strange when the idea is that we should prevent all types of honour problems.*

*So, we now wonder how you, as a national authority commissioned by the government, can support and employ such lecturers to teach preventive work against honour repression, violence and killings.*

*We have many girls, boys and women who seek help, live in protected housing or have protected identities It is outrageous that you support and make use of such an example as course material, when it contradicts the entire purpose of the education. We are glad that there are individuals who practice their religion and deal with some issues that can be useful in the prevention of honour violence in the home. But there are also other religions that are known for their views on women and homosexuality. Where do they end up in this context? For example, Södertälje has great problems with these issues, but there it is not about Muslims but Syrians?????*

*Is it really the intention behind the government commission that we should learn that if a girl has not reached puberty and neither is mentally mature, she can let other people decide about her marriage?? Is this not contrary to Swedish legislation, which is one of the tools we can make use of? Is this simply not in opposition to the UN conventions on human rights?*

*We are profoundly outraged by such recommendations from the Board to employ imams or other principal figures in order to prevent the complex of problems.*

*Religion can never be reformed because it is holy and has been put forward by prophets. The day a new prophet appears, we can hope for a better, equal holy book,*

*which takes into consideration all those issues that at the moment create conflicts and violence among people because of their choice of partner, sexuality, etcetera.*

*Best wishes  
2011-09-16*

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## **6.4 LETTER 2 TO THE SWEDISH NATIONAL BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS, 2011**

*The educational campaign "Married against one's will" is a very good initiative, there is still need for much more education, research and knowledge. The lecturers so far have been first-rate, they have been the ultimate source of knowledge on this topic in Sweden. The final day of the course, September 7 in Helsingborg, was something of a cliffhanger, and it stirred up feelings that there was not enough time to talk about and analyze.*

*What we consider to be a fundamental value in our work, and which all the other lecturers had stressed, is that human rights are universal, indivisible and inviolable. None of the human rights may be compromised about.*

*Compromising about human rights for certain ethnic/religious groups in society is racist and contrary to the human rights.*

*In Sweden, the Church has not willingly let go of its power and developed, but for as long as possible it tried to hold on to ancient notions about female submission and men's right to decide over women. This has been a long struggle, primarily from the women's movement. The Swedish Church and its advocates still try to restrict the human rights, such as women's reproductive rights, the right for same-sex couples to marry, and the right of homosexuals to practice their beliefs.*

*To view culture emanating from northern Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia, where Islam is the dominant religion, as a static, homogenous entity and to **designate** their religious leaders as spokespersons for the entire group, is prejudiced*

*in our opinion. This must also be perceived as an insult to all secular Muslims, people who have been exposed to violations and restrictions and yet stood up and fought against religious oppression.*

*When the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs chooses to bring in an imam and principal for a confessional school as a lecturer, a person who himself argues that parents have the right to restrict their children's choice of marriage partner and that homosexuals shall not have the same rights as heterosexuals, then we feel insulted both on our own behalf and on behalf of all the girls, women and young men whom we have had the honour of assisting in their struggle for their human rights and to be able to live a life of their own choosing. There are other lecturers that could be employed and who are great, such as Eduardo Grutzky and Sara Mohammad.*

*During the six days that we have participated in the Board's course "Married against one's will", we have constantly met frustration among the participants with the cultural relativist climate that prevails in Sweden, where we risk being called racist and islamophobic when we uphold the rights of children and women before ancient customs and religious norms. We have felt confident about the future and our continuous work when one lecturer after another has confirmed that individual human rights are above everything, and that forced marriages are based on cultural traditions maintained by religion. Everyone shall have the right to freely exercise his or her religion and culture, but noone shall be allowed to force cultural and religious opinions on another person.*

*The National Board for Youth Affairs could instead, with its assignment "Married against one's will", work for criminalization of forced marriages, to counteract arranged marriages, to review the attachment immigration when it comes to marriage between two parties that have never met, and to prohibit confessional free schools. The latter cannot be labelled as islamophobic while the majority of the confessional free schools do not have an Islamic direction. In this way it would become easier for children to be noticed and to get support if they risk being married against their will.*

*We understand your intentions, but there are other ways to reach these young people. Through collaboraton with SFI (Swedish language training for immigrants), refugee coordinators and different organizations, the Women's aid group in Höganäs has found other inroads. We have had insight protected Qi soft movement and cooperated with an international women's organization, which arranges insight protected swimming lessons.*

*Best wishes*

*Karin Ahlquist – Kvinnojouren i Höganäs  
Stevie Ahlquist – Kvinnojouren i Höganäs  
Cecilia Nilsson – Kvinnojouren i Höganäs*