

Press Release

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Ref: 355a09

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47 member States

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PACE calls for prohibition and penalisation of gender-based human rights violations

Strasbourg, 28.04.2009 – In a resolution adopted today, PACE invited the member states to adapt their national legislation in order to prohibit and penalise forced marriages, female genital mutilation and any other gender-based violations of human rights, encouraging them to prosecute abductions, illegal confinements and forced returns of women or girls to their countries of origin. According to the parliamentarians, cultural or religious relativism cannot be invoked to justify these acts.

"It is a matter of the member states' responsibility that they should do their utmost to guard against and combat these anachronistic, inhuman practices both nationally and internationally," said Antigoni Papadopoulou (Cyprus, ALDE), rapporteur for the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. "British legislation on forced marriages is exemplary in this respect, in that it provides a means of stopping potential victims from being taken out of the country against their will and of compelling the family to disclose the whereabouts of a member considered to be in danger," she added, commending the courage of a victim of Bangladeshi origin who gave her personal [testimony](#) today on the sidelines of the session.

The Assembly also called upon the member states to develop co-operation procedures at the international level with the authorities in the countries of origin, encouraging them to intercede with the families concerned and to strengthen women's rights. The parliamentarians also advocate raising the awareness of consular staff as regards the serious risks facing women and girls forcibly returned to their countries of origin, and as regards the applicable legal framework.

In a recommendation to the Committee of Ministers, the PACE reiterated its request for the Council of Europe to draft a convention to combat the most serious and widespread forms of violence against women, including forced marriages.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) – Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political groups: EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); SOC (Socialist Group); EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).