

Over murders were committed as "honour killings". the

[Art & Culture](#), [Multiculturalism](#)



Over the years, Canada has enjoyed a steady flow of immigrants coming and settling in Canada. Naturally, the immigrants bring their distinct cultures with them. Canada prides itself to be accepting of foreign cultures. However, that acceptance has been deeply shaken on June 30, 2009, where four female bodies has been found in a car that had been driven into the Rideau Canal in Kingston Ontario. The four victims were Zainab, Sahar, Geeti Shafia, and Rona Amir Mohammad.

It did not take long for the chief of police to charged Mohammad Shafia, Tooba Mohammad Yahya, and Hamed Shafia with the women's murder. It was as the investigation matured, it was deemed that the murders were committed as "honour killings". The shock of this crime echoed throughout the country. With it came a more intense media attention that did not always help facilitate the integration ideals of Canadian society. Had the multicultural ideals of Canada hit a limit where cultures or religions were in a unsolvable juxtaposition? This essay endeavours to show that this is not the case and honour killings are not a conflict of cultures, or religions but an problem with individuals. Feminist scholars and international human rights organizations describe honour killings as the de-humanizing of a woman for the purposes of sexual control, honour crimes are "marked as a culturally specific form of violence, distinct from other widespread domestic or intimate partner violence, including the more familiar passion crime". The key challenge with this form of violence is not only its prevention, but also public perception. Within immigration countries, such as Canada, the perception of honour killing are often understood as a form of "immigrant backwardness" by way of its description in media or policy conversation.

Which leads quickly to a form of “us versus them” mentality. For example, the study guide for immigrants applying for Canadian citizenship the headline “The equality of Women and Men” proclaims the following: In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, “honour killings,” female genital mutilation, forced marriage, or other gender-based violence. Those guilty of those crimes are severely punished under Canada’s criminal law. This, of course, is absolutely correct.

Yet, it places the weight solely on the immigrant failing to recognize society’s need to take an active role to include immigrants with problematic views and help explain Canada’s firm stance on the issue. Historically, honour-related violence has been practiced in North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Latin America and Southern Europe. In the present-day immigration situation, these social patterns of violence become altered as people immigrate to countries like Canada that see this form of violence as unacceptable. Media plays a formative role in opinion building and awareness of this issue. Vatandoost explains eloquently how media portrayal often leads to a misplaced belief that honour killing is interlinked with religion or a natural occurrence in specific regions outside of western countries. The prevalence of honour killing and of honour-related violence is very hard to indicate. Professor Mojab said about honour killing that, “It doesn’t have any direct connection with religion at all, it is not unique to any particular religion.

We see it among Hindus. We see it among Jews and Christians in the (Middle East) region. It is also not limited to the Middle East or the Arab world.”

Considering the public attention and concern, it is surprising that the Department of Justice has not expressed any policy statements or guidance on the circumstances of honour crimes. One of the only mentions of honour crimes by the Canadian government is a new immigration guidebooks warning to immigrants. The criminal in many cases is typically a male in the family (a brother or father) whose role was supposed to be protecting the victim from any harm. The perpetrator in these crimes has no “ economic motivation” and has nothing but a confused notion that killing the person who was perceived to bring dishonour on the family. The logical oxymoron of committing a heinous crime to restore honour does not come to bare.

This dishonour is a result of the male members of the family controlling the sexual behaviours of the female members of the family. Sati and honour killing are based on different ideologies. One important element that overlaps in both crimes must be emphasized on: the “ element of coercive external social pressure.” Without this, the ability to commit such crime is nearly impossible. Western immigrant-receiving countries are generally opposed to honour killing and other forms of honour-related violence.

Honour-related violence that don't include murder are rarely reported on, though evidence suggests that it may a problem as well. The state needs to preserve its policy of assimilation of the immigrants into Canada, but at the same side improve itself about the delicate border between cultural freedom and illegal activities.

No right can be ultimate and neither can cultural freedom. It is therefore a logical consequence that some form of balance needs to be found where immigrants can lead their lives freely within the confines of national law but also communicate criminal behaviour in a way that it does not prejudice the general public by way of over simplifications or generalizations. Various articles in Canadian press publications pronounce the Shafia murders mentioned to in the introductory paragraph, as an example of serious breaks within Canadian multiculturalism. In the Toronto Star, Daniel Dale (2009) begins his commentary shortly after the murders s follows: We are shocked, naturally, when it is alleged that honour killings have occurred in Canada. They seem alien, inaccessible, at odds with everything we know about our country. How could a primitive thing like that happen in a progressive place like this? While his point is well received, it is defined by the problematic us versus them attitude. It casually overlooks the common need to address and deal with the issue beyond characterization of such heinous acts as “ alien,” “ inaccessible,” and “ primitive”.

It is this denial of communal responsibility that give these acts room to occur. Perhaps even more problematically, it reinforces the myth of Canada's past and current history as one of non-violence and welcoming friendliness. Seeing honour killings as solely as an immigration problem that can only be remedied by more restrictive immigration rules, is one-sided and does not do the problem justice. It can only be solved with a carefully balanced approach between screening newcomers for past involvement in such acts and education in Canada to promote an understanding why Canadian society

cannot accept such acts. This must extend beyond a simple questionnaire and classroom session but become part of the intricate Canadian social fabric by a careful and attentive communication in the media to prevent general stigmatization of any group or religion. This would make any attempt to organically erase such activities from occurring null and void as any marginalized group tends to revert to its more extreme impulses in response. In conclusion it can be said that honour killings do not pose an impasse in Canada's immigration approach, but rather a challenge that can be mastered with a more inclusive approach of screening, education, and public communication.