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# Quebec women's council unveils 7 steps to stop 'honour crimes' | CBC News

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More can be done to help prevent so-called "honour-based violence" in Canada, says the Quebec Council for the Status of Women.

In 2011, the Quebec government mandated the council to study the phenomenon in light of the Shafia case.

“These murders are only the tip of the iceberg.” - *Julie Miville-Dechéne, president of the Quebec Council for the Status of Women*

Mohammad Shafia, his wife Tooba Yahya and their son Hamed were [convicted of murdering](#) Shafia's three teenage daughters and his first wife in January 2012.

The Quebec Council for the Status of Women has come out with seven recommendations after studying 17 reports of so-called honour crimes in Canada since 1991. In the cases studied, 12 victims were killed and five survived.

“What is most troubling, is that these murders are only the tip of the iceberg. Honour-based violence takes many forms that are not exclusive to any culture or religion, as indicated by the different faiths and origins of Canadian victims,” said council president Julie Miville-Dechéne.

- [Shafia jury finds all guilty of 1st-degree murder](#)
- [A year after Shafia conviction, fight to end family violence inches along](#)

The council was careful to point out that so-called honour-based violence is not exclusive to ethnic communities.

"It was not too long ago that in Quebec, teen mothers were sent away from home until their pregnancies came to term," a statement from the council said.

## How will the proposed charter of values affect this issue?

The Parti Québécois' proposed ban on public employees wearing overtly religious symbols continues to spark debate. Some of those in support of the charter argue it would help immigrants integrate into Quebec society. With that in mind, some questioned what impact the charter would have on this kind of violence.

But Julie Miville-Dechéne, president of the Quebec Council for the Status of Women, made it clear she believes there is no link between the two issues.

"For me, the charter and this violence are two different issues. The people who try to use violence against women, honour-based violence, to defend their ideological point of view on the charter are wrong," she said.

## 7 recommendations to the Quebec government:

1. Develop a policy to fight against honour-based violence, in consultation with women's groups and community organizations.
2. Develop an action plan that includes the following measures:
  - Train all workers (including youth protection officials, police, judiciaries, teachers and medical professionals) who deal with people at risk of honour-based violence, including forced marriage and genital mutilation.
  - Develop tools to help workers recognize the signs of honour-based violence and to help them evaluate potential risks.
  - Inform women and minorities affected by honour-based violence about their rights and the resources available to help them.
  - Increase funding for organizations that support women affected by honour-based violence, so that they can offer monitoring, extended accompaniment and adapted housing.
  - Develop a strategy aimed at helping youth, such as a guide on how to prevent honour crimes, or a guide on the rights of Canadians.
3. Review the strategy to fight against the practice of female genital mutilation.
4. Put mechanisms in place to protect immigrant women who have been sponsored by their spouses and inform them of their rights in cases of fraud or violence. Also monitor women sponsored by their spouses until they obtain their citizenship, in order to ensure their safety and their rights are respected.
5. Examine the laws in place to ensure that children and adults who are threatened by forced marriages are protected by our legal system and, if necessary, ask the federal government to modify its legislation to ensure those protections are in place.
6. Review the Youth Protection Act, the criteria for the evaluation and the intervention of the department of youth protection, keeping in mind the particular risks linked to honour-based violence.
7. Co-ordinate the implementation of an outreach strategy to challenge the patriarchal concept of honour at the core of some of the communities in question, and actively promote awareness about equality between men and women.

## Social workers need training

Miville-Dechêne said the council plans to translate its almost 200-page report from French to English in the next six weeks. She said it's important that as many people as possible have access to their explanation of what defines a so-called honour crime.

"We want everybody to be able to have access to this explanation of what is an honour crime. I think it's also a first in Canada, so we want everybody to be able to read it," she said.

She said training for social workers is urgently needed in order to help them deal with people who are at risk.

"Honour crimes are complicated ... it's not only murder. There's a whole sequence. First of all the family wants to control the sexuality ... the whole schedule of those women. There's also genital mutilation ... forced marriage, violence, virginity tests," Miville-Dechéne said.

"To intervene, all these social workers should know how it works."