

## Girl, 15, 'beheaded' in Afghanistan after her family turned down marriage proposal

- **Two men have been arrested following the death of the teenage girl in Kunduz province, northern Afghanistan**
- **Victim, named as 'Gisa', was beheaded by her cousin after she and her family turned down his marriage proposal, a police spokesman said**

By [Kerry Mcdermott](#)

A teenage girl was beheaded by a relative in northern Afghanistan after she turned down his marriage proposals, according to reports.

The victim, named as Gisa, was decapitated with a knife in the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province on Tuesday, local police said. She is believed to be around 15-years-old.

A police spokesman said two men, named as Sadeq and Massoud, had been arrested following the teenage girl's murder.

The two men are understood to be close relatives of the victim that live in the same village.

Local police sources have said the men behind the attack wanted to marry the girl, but their advances had been turned down by victim's father.



Violence: The teenage girl is understood to have been beheaded after she refused a relative's repeated marriage proposals (FILE PHOTO)

Gisa is understood to have been attacked as she returned to her home in Kulkul village after going out to collect water from a nearby well.

Her father told a local news agency he had not wanted his daughter to get married because she was too young.

Afghanistan's Taliban regime - notorious for its oppression of women in the country - was ousted in 2001, but extreme violence against women is still rife.

In 2009 the Elimination of Violence Against Woman law was introduced in Afghanistan, criminalising child marriage, forced marriage, 'giving away' a girl or woman to settle a dispute, among other acts of violence against the female population of the ultra-conservative Islamic nation.

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But the UN has said there is a 'long way to go' before the rights of Afghan women are fully protected.

Comprehensive official statistics on the number of incidents of violence against women in the country are difficult to establish, with the majority of cases going unreported. However in the year to March 2011, Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission registered over 2,000 acts of violence against women.

The NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force has given high priority to re-establishing women's rights that were eradicated under the Taliban as part of its efforts to create a security strategy for Afghanistan. But with the deadline for international troops to pull out of the country - scheduled for the end of 2014 - looming,

activists have warned that the outlook for the female population remains bleak.

Human Rights Watch has said women's rights are increasingly at risk in the run up to the scheduled draw-down of NATO forces, with early and forced marriage, impunity for violence against women and lack of access of justice among the long list of challenges they still face.



'Beheaded': The teenage girl is understood to have been attacked as she returned to her home in the Imam Sahib district after fetching water from a nearby well

While Afghan women have won back some basic rights since the Taliban was toppled 11 years ago, so-called honour killings remain relatively commonplace in the war-torn Islamic nation.

### **HONOUR KILLINGS IN AFGHANISTAN THIS YEAR**

The summer of 2012 saw a spate of so-called honour killings in Afghanistan.

In July a father shot his two teenage daughters dead in the Nad Ali district of Helmand when they returned home four days after running away with a man.

Earlier that same month shocking video footage emerged of a 22-year-old Afghan woman being gunned down with an AK47 in front of a crowd of baying villagers in Parwan province.

Thought to have been married to a member of a hardline Taliban militant group, the woman, known only as Najiba, was executed after being accused of having an affair with a Taliban commander.

Her murder followed a horrific case in Ghazni province in which a man beheaded his ex-wife and two of their children.

Serata's former spouse barged into her home and decapitated her in front of their eight-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter.

He then killed the children because they had seen, police said.

This year the country's Independent Human Rights Commission recorded 16 incidents of honour killings in March and April alone, the first two months of the Afghan new year.

During the month of July a spate of brutal killings in the country - which left four women and two children dead - attracted international attention.

The Independent Human Rights Commission warned last month that Afghanistan has seen a sharp rise in cases of both honour killings and rape, adding that many incidents of murder and sexual assault go unreported to authorities.

The ever-present threat of violence at the hands of men in a patriarchal society has also led to an increase in cases of Afghan women taking their own lives.

Dozens of women commit suicide in the country each year, often to escape failed or abusive marriages.

Divorce is still taboo in Afghanistan, and women who flee their marriages, if caught, face stringent prison sentences.

A family court established in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, in 2003 offered a semblance of hope for women in the country that are trapped in forced marriages or subject to domestic violence - but it still adheres to Afghanistan's version of Islamic sharia law.

Traditional Afghan culture places no onus on a man who wants to leave his spouse to go through legal proceedings - he can divorce his wife without any approval of the justice system. In the court in Kabul, a woman must plead her case before judges and lawyers, and she must have five male witnesses willing to attend in support.

A recent case saw a 17-year-old girl forced to accept a marriage proposal from a man she despised successfully

argued for her engagement to be scrapped by the court, according to [The Washington Post](#). Tragically for Farima, who dreamed of becoming a doctor, the decision did not mark a return to the life of relative freedom she enjoyed before her engagement. Before taking her battle to the court, the desperate teenager had thrown herself from the roof of her Kabul home.

Farima broke her back in the fall, but survived. Her fiancé insisted that their planned marriage must still go ahead, leading the now disabled teenager to take her battle to the family court. Following the case, the 17-year-old is back in her childhood home. Her family did not allow her to return to school, and the injuries she sustained in her failed suicide bid mean relatives fear she will be unlikely to marry in the future. While she managed, against the odds, to free herself from a fate she dreaded, the future for this defiant Afghan girl still looks bleak.



Challenges: Afghan women have won back some basic human rights since the fall of the Taliban, but there is still a 'long way to go', activists say (FILE PHOTO)