

## Tory MP backs Bill to curb growth of Sharia courts



Tory MP Kris Hopkins praised the work of Baroness Cox in trying to ensure Sharia courts do not form a separate legal system.

- [Kris Hopkins: We need answers to the doubts and distrust raised by call for sharia law \(yorkshirepost.co.uk, 08 May 2013\)](#)
- [MP: Justice Secretary should curb influence of Sharia courts \(22 April 2013\)](#)
- [MEP speaks out against spread of Sharia courts \(18 April 2013\)](#)

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An MP has praised a cross-bench Peer's attempts to curb the growth of quasi-legal systems in the UK, which discriminate against women.

Tory MP Kris Hopkins said Baroness Caroline Cox is doing "exceptional" work in the House of Lords, through her Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill.

There are an estimated 85 Sharia courts operating in the UK, and many are believed to discriminate against women and back polygamy.

### Unhelpful

Mr Hopkins said in a piece for the Yorkshire Post newspaper, that most of the debate about the issue of Sharia courts is unhelpful and thoughtless.

But he said Baroness Cox's work was a "notable" exception.

He said: "Baroness Cox's exceptional work in the House of Lords seeks to ensure that sharia tribunals and councils operate within the law and should not form a concurrent legal system in the UK."

### Risk

A recent BBC Panorama investigation discovered that women were being put at risk by Sharia courts.

The programme shows an Islamic scholar telling an undercover reporter that she should only report domestic abuse to the police "as a last resort".

Mr Hopkins said that the chief crown prosecutor for the Crown Prosecution Service in the North West saw evidence from the programme and was disappointed, but not surprised.

### Surprise

He said: "If the CPS is not surprised about such findings, why are we, as a Government, allowing such things to happen?"

Last month Mr Hopkins asked Justice Secretary Chris Grayling to block attempts by Sharia councils to be recognised by the Government.

It followed a statement from Bradford Council for Mosques which called on the Government to recognise Sharia councils, and better equip and support them.

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