

A Frenzy of Honor Killings: Neda, Soraya, Bursa—and Me
by Phyllis Chesler
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The world has just watched the cold-blooded murder of [Neda](#) in Teheran. The last sentence she uttered was: “Death to the Dictator.” Many of us are now about to see the haunting film about the real-life stoning of another Iranian woman, known as [Soraya M.](#) These two tragedies took place in a Muslim country.

The blood of real (not just reel) Muslim women, murdered either by the state or by their families, continues to cry out—not only in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa but also in the West.

Two days ago, on June 24, 2009, in Germany, a Turkish father, Mehmet O, a kebab shop owner, repeatedly knifed his fifteen-year-old daughter, [Bursa](#), while she was sleeping. Despite the fact that Bursa, her mother, and her sister all wore hijab, Mehmet O. still felt Bursa was too “westernized,” and that she did not want her “strict Muslim father to control her life.”

Bursa’s friends described her as a “fun-loving girl, (who) loved hip hop music....But that is no reason to kill someone.”

This is certainly not the first honor killing in Germany or in Europe by a Muslim father or brother.

This very June, in Norway, an Iraqi woman, [Vian Bakir Fatah](#), who had divorced her violent husband, converted to Christianity, and was dating a Norwegian man, was stabbed to death by her ex-husband and by her violent 16-year-old son.

Earlier this year, on March 4, 2009, a Turkish brother strangled his 20-year-old twin-sister, [Gulsum Semin](#), because she allegedly had an abortion. Her father has been arrested as an accessory to this murder.

On May 15, 2008, Ahmad-Sobair Obeidi, a twenty-four-year old Afghan, brutalized his 16-year-old sister, [Morsal](#) for months—then stabbed her twenty three times in a parking lot. He was ashamed of his sister for wearing “inappropriate clothing” and felt that she had

“disconnected from her family.” Ahmad himself had a long history of criminal behavior. Obeidi was sentenced to life in prison.

In June, of 2005, a Turkish 25-year-old brother, Ali Karabey, repeatedly shot his 20-year-old sister, [Gonul Karabey](#), in a garden shed to prevent her from marrying her German boyfriend. In 2006, this brother received a life sentence. As in so many other honor killings, Ali promised his sister that he would help with the marriage if they met.

Deceit, trickery, and false promises sometimes play a role in honor killing. In 2007, in Toronto, Aqsa Parvez was lured from a shelter for battered women by her family who told her that they missed her so much they couldn't sleep. In 2008, in Dallas, the Said sisters were lured to their deaths by their mother Tissie who told them that their father really wanted to work things out.

What can be done to prevent such honor killings in the West? Perhaps nothing. The cultural and/or religious imperative might prove too strong even for those who are living in the West. However, some people believe that life sentences, and serious jail time for family accessories will serve as a disincentive.

Some people think that all Muslim fundamentalists or the families of Muslims who commit an honor killing should be deported from the West. Some people believe that Muslim immigrants must be educated about our laws and must sign an agreement to follow them. The Dutch government is now trying this idea out.

Some people believe that shelters specifically for battered Muslim girls and women who may be honor killing targets should be funded and staffed by experts skilled in this area.

And, some people believe that violence against girls and women is both overwhelming and universal and that it is “racist” or “persecutory” to single out only Muslim violence. Doing so, allows us to forget how much bigger violence against women, including femicide, really is.

I agree with all these points. I also believe that honor killings are not the same as western style domestic violence and have published a [study](#) about this.

Most honor killings concern whether or not a girl or woman wears hijab and conducts herself in a strictly Islamist and anti- or non-Western way.

I am currently working on a paper about whether or not to ban the burqa, niqab, or hijab in America. Some Jewish and Christian religious people do not like the idea of the government controlling anyone's religious rights. They fear that they might be next in line. Nevertheless, in 2004, France banned hijab in the public square. President Sarkozy has vowed to ban the burqa as well.

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