



## **Saudi Arabia and Why Child Marriage Is Allowed**

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The nation of Saudi Arabia is in a flux because this nation is often rebuked for allowing child marriages to take place. However, for Saudi Islamic clerics they justify this on the grounds of what Mohammed did. After all, Mohammed married a child himself and for many Islamic clerics in Saudi Arabia this means that child marriage is sanctioned. Therefore, the morals of Saudi Arabian law and the concepts of Islam appear to be one of confusion?

On the one hand the Saudi Arabian legal system of Islamic law supports killing people for adultery and homosexuality. However, on the other hand it is deemed to be Islamic to marry a young child of 8 years of age or 9 years of age, irrespective if the male is 30 years old or 40 years old, or even older. Surely these morals are twisted?

Before focusing even more on the strange morals of the Saudi Arabian legal system it is vital to state why child marriages are allowed. This of course applies to Mohammed. After all, when Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, was 49 years of age he married a 6 year old child called Aisha. When Aisha was 9 years old and Mohammed was 52 years old, he consummated the marriage.

Therefore, this sets a major problem for the conservative Islamic religious leaders in Saudi Arabia because they want to govern society by the laws of Islamic Sharia Law and the Hadiths. If they support raising the age of marriage like the majority of mainly Muslim nations have done, then how does this fit in with the legal system being based on the teachings of Mohammed?

The following quotes are all from highly acclaimed Muslim scholars and these Hadiths have been followed and read by Muslims since the early days of the advent of Islam. Sahih Al-Bukhari states in volume 5, 234, that "Narrated Aisha: The prophet engaged me when I was a girl of six. We went to Medina and stayed at the home of Harith Kharzraj" and it continues that "Unexpectedly Allah's Messenger came to me in the forenoon and my mother handed me over to him, and at that time I was a girl of nine years of age."

>From the Hadith of the scholar Muslim, volume 2, 3309, "Aisha reported: Allah's Messenger married me when I was six years old, and I was admitted to his house at the age of nine....." Al-Bukhari also states "Narrated Aisha: that the prophet married her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old."

For people who do not understand the Hadiths then I will briefly mention what they are. The "Hadith" is a clear record of the founding father of Islam, Mohammed. The numerous Hadiths are based on Mohammed's words and deeds according to statements written by his companions, wives, and relatives. Sahih Al-Bukhari is accepted by the vast majority of mainstream Muslims because of authenticity and the Hadiths are very important to Muslims throughout the world.

Before focusing on deeper political issues it is important to mention that laws in Saudi Arabia are based on Sharia Islamic Law and the Hadiths. Therefore, we are not talking about people on the margins of society who have no power, but who support child marriage. On the contrary, we are talking about major political leaders and Sunni Muslim religious leaders who support child marriage.

Therefore, the Hadiths vindicate religious leaders like the kingdom's Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh. To him, the Koran and the Hadiths must be upheld and this also applies to killing all converts from Islam and persecuting all other religions.

Given this, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh is adamant that marrying young female child brides is consistent with both the teachings of Mohammed and the life of Mohammed. He stated that "it is incorrect to say that it's not permitted to marry girls who are 15 and younger." In truth, if we look at the teachings of Islam, then clearly Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh is correct.

The Grand Mufti is clearly focused on abiding by Islamic scripture and the Hadiths will vindicate him and then he, and other Islamic leaders and scholars, will base this within Islamic Sharia Law. He further added that "A girl aged 10 or 12 can be married. Those who think she's too young are wrong and they are being unfair to her."

This article is not merely based on "ifs" and "buts" but on the reality of the Islamic justice system in Saudi Arabia and it is a real problem and one which should shame Saudi Arabia. However, and this is the crunch, the majority of Islamic scholars and leaders firmly believe that they are implementing God's law in Saudi Arabia.

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Several months ago a judge in Saudi Arabia justified the right of an 8 year-old child to marry a man of 47 years of age. Even after the mother signed a petition to demand the annulment of the marriage, the judge still refused because of the teachings of Islam. Therefore the judge, Sheikh Habib Abdallah al-Habib, refused openly to annul the marriage and in his eyes it is morally right to marry a child to an old man.

Of course child marriage is not only a problem which affects Saudi Arabia because sadly many young children are victims in various different nations. Yet we are not talking about "a failed state" whereby you get chaos like in Afghanistan and Somalia. Instead we are talking about a nation with vast energy resources and a legal system which is being regulated by Sunni Islamic clerics and the government of this nation.

Some people are now speaking out and trying to challenge the conservative status quo. Therefore, some moderate Sunni Islamic scholars want to modernize and change the legal system. Despite this, the conservative stranglehold remains firm and the co-founder of the Society of Defending Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia, Wajeha al-Huwaider, states that it is vital to stand up to people who desire to "keep us backward and in the dark ages."

While it is vital that change must come from within, it is also essential that America, China, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, and all modern nations must hold Saudi Arabia accountable. The rights of children should not be based on either energy resources or appeasing conservative Islam. Instead it must be based on global morals and nations which violate the rights of children should be held accountable.

It is also an affront to many people that Saudi Arabia can discriminate openly against other religions and violate the rights of women. After all, not one single Buddhist temple or Christian church is allowed and leaving the Islamic faith can mean either imprisonment or death. Therefore, it is time to challenge aspects of Islamic Sharia Law in this nation and in other parts of the world when it infringes on the rights of children, women, and religious minorities.

On what moral grounds is it that a child of 9 can marry an old man? On what moral grounds is it that you can kill homosexuals? On what moral grounds is it that you can kill converts from Islam to Buddhism, Christianity, or any other faith? On what moral grounds is it that you can deny women from speaking openly or driving cars? If the moral grounds are solely based on the Koran and Hadiths, like in Saudi Arabia, then what is this telling you?

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