

1) Watch the video and decide if the following statements are true or false. If you have problems opening the video from our website (weebly), turn to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fh6ebjeziN4>

- 1) Sharia Courts are Britain's official courts.
- 2) Sharia Courts tend to deal with criminal cases.
- 3) Sharia Courts have no legal jurisdiction.
- 4) Sharia Courts are highly regulated.
- 5) There are about a hundred Sharia Courts in Britain.
- 6) Sisters in Muslim families are advised in the video to marry Shi'a brothers.
- 7) According to the Sharia Judge (Shaykh Haithman Al Haddad), a man should be able to explain the reason why he hit his wife.
- 8) If the Sharia Judge was informed of domestic violence, he would immediately report it to the police.
- 9) According to the Sharia Judge, the word 'beat' has several ways of interpreting.
- 10) The Sharia Judge says he did not consider Sara's husband's conviction because the court document was not produced by a Sharia court.
- 11) The Sharia Judge has cases only of Londoners.
- 12) The oldest Sharia Court in London has no female judges.
- 13) According to the Sharia Judge, Sharia Courts do not employ female judges because that would not be accepted by Islamic women.
- 14) In Birmingham there is a female Sharia Judge.
- 15) According to the Sharia Judge, it is scientifically proven that women enjoy if men are superior to them.
- 16) The CPS [Crown Prosecution Service] is the state's clerical legal system.
- 17) The law in the UK does not effectively regulate the running of a parallel legal system.

2) Find the matching collocations.

belittled; body; convicted; court process; dismissively with sy; disputes; documents (2x); go to the police; lie; of her children; preacher; Prosecutor; sanctioned divorce; to seek help; violence

- 1) go through a sharia
- 2) custody arrangement
- 3) criminally
- 4) to present official court
- 5) to ignore
- 6) to feel
- 7) religiously
- 8) domestic
- 9) utter
- 10) hate
- 11) to settle family
- 12) regulatory
- 13) Chief Crown
- 14) signpost individuals
- 15) to deter women to
- 16) behave

3) What is the word defined? Some of the letters are given for you.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| make an aggressive pressure or intimidation | h_r_s_ |
| faith, a system of religious beliefs | c_e_d |
| repeat one's words in a manipulative way | m_s_u_te |
| a principle or belief (esp. religious, philosophical) | t_n_t |

4) Find the ending of each paragraph (A-L).

Sharia, or Muslim religious law, has been highly controversial in the UK. Interpretations of Sharia are associated in other countries with harsh penalties unknown in the UK; campaigners and politicians worry that Muslim women are discriminated against when family disputes are resolved under Sharia. UKIP says that: "The law of the land must apply to us all. We oppose any other system of law"; its leader has referred to "80 practising Sharia courts around the United Kingdom".

Are there 'Sharia courts' in Britain?

While there are undoubtedly lots of different councils and tribunals dealing with Sharia principles, they aren't courts of law. Most are Sharia 'councils' set up to make decisions on purely religious matters, 1)

Sharia councils

Getting married for the purposes of your religion doesn't necessarily mean you are married in the eyes of the state. Equally, the paperwork required for a civil divorce needn't be recognised by your religion. For this reason, many Sharia councils exist to issue Islamic divorce certificates, 2)

Family law and Sharia

Other services related to family issues might be offered by a Sharia council. Family mediation is one example. Some campaigners worry about using mediation by religious bodies 3)

In 2014 Baroness Cox, a member of the House of Lords, tried to introduce a law to ensure that women aren't disadvantaged in mediation by religious bodies, and make clear that they aren't a court. But, formally, this is already the case. While feuding couples have to at least consider mediation before going to court, it doesn't override family law. A court has to sign off on any agreement 4)

In 2013, the High Court was asked by an Orthodox Jewish couple to accept the ruling of a Jewish religious court on post-divorce family arrangements. The judge said that while the agreement would carry weight, it would be non-binding, 5)

Sharia arbitration bodies

The way Sharia might become legally enforceable is where a Sharia organisation is used for arbitration. This means taking a commercial or personal dispute to a neutral forum and agreeing to be bound by what it decides. It's up to the people having the dispute who they agree to be the arbiter, and they can even choose to apply rules other than English law to the affair - 6) ...

The Muslim Arbitration Tribunal is an example of this approach. It appoints one qualified lawyer and one expert in Islamic law to each case. In this way, it tries to ensure that the decision reached is 7)

So if both parties agree, arbitral tribunals can decide certain issues by applying religious principles. This doesn't make them courts as such. Their legal authority comes from being voluntarily chosen as a decision-maker, and they can't make 8)

How many of these Sharia organisations exist?

One piece of research from the University of Reading has identified 30 major councils, and some smaller ones, providing these services. An estimate of "85 at least" was given in a 2009 report by the think tank *Civitas*. It was repeated in an interview in the *Telegraph* with Baroness Cox in April 2014. The UKIP leader Nigel Farage mentioned a figure of 80 on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme in January 2015. UKIP told us that he got his number from the *Telegraph* article. But the *Civitas* estimate includes online forums and admits that the actual number is "indeterminate". 9)

Law versus reality

The coalition government had said that the courts have the powers they need to protect people from coercion and unequal treatment. But campaigners like Baroness Cox reply that whatever about the strict legal position, "the power of Sharia councils 10)

Academics tend to be more relaxed, saying that "fears that councils are forming a parallel legal system appear to be unfounded". A new book by a Dutch researcher is reportedly 11)

Researchers also stress that we need more information to work out how important Sharia councils are on the ground, and the experiences of people using them. Similarly, the government now says that "there is evidence of a problem, but we have an inadequate understanding of all the issues involved". It has commissioned a review into 12)

By *Conor James McKinney* (2016)

Paragraph endings:

- A) so long as there is no conflict between the two.
- B) lies in how they are perceived by their communities".
- C) any decisions that are contrary to national law.
- D) in line with both secular and religious law.
- E) and give advice on other aspects of *religious* law. They're often attached to mosques.
- F) made after divorce for it to be legally binding, and won't do so if the judge thinks it's unfair.
- G) more critical about how women in particular are treated.
- H) neither party could get around English law by agreeing to abide by the decision of another tribunal.
- I) So far as we are aware, there are no definitive studies.
- J) although there are some bodies that mix Sharia principles with legally binding arbitration. But none can overrule the regular courts.
- K) to work out agreements about children and finances after a marriage breaks down.
- L) whether Sharia is being "misused or applied in a way which is incompatible with the law", to report in 2017.