

The Sunday Telegraph

Oppressed women

SIR – The principle of equality before the law is a central pillar of our democracy. Yet many women in Britain are not experiencing the legal rights to which they are entitled.

There are particular concerns about the suffering of some Muslim women who are oppressed by religiously sanctioned gender discrimination – especially in relation to polygamy, divorce, inheritance provisions and domestic violence.

Their suffering is an affront to our hard-fought freedoms. While the forthcoming inquiry into the operation of sharia courts might be an important first step, it is clear that much more needs to be done. We urge the Government to adopt the provisions of Baroness Cox's Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill, which recently passed all stages in the House of Lords without amendment.

The Bill cannot solve all of the complex and sensitive issues involved, but it does insist that the rights of all women, and the rule of law, are upheld.

Fiona Bruce MP (Con)

Jim Fitzpatrick MP (Lab)

Ruth Cadbury MP (Lab)

John Pugh MP (Lib Dem)

Lord Carlile of Berriew (Lib Dem)

Lord Mackay of Clashfern (Con)

Lord Dholakia (Lib Dem)

Baroness Deech (Crossbench)

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench)

Frank Field MP (Lab)

Andrew Mitchell MP (Con)

Lord West of Spithead (Lab)

Baroness Buscombe (Con)

Jim Shannon MP (DUP)

Charles Walker MP (Con)

Philip Davies MP (Con)
Lord Stoddart of Swindon (ILP)
Lord Tebbit (Con)
Sir David Amess MP (Con)
Philip Hollobone MP (Con)
Heather Wheeler MP (Con)
Lord Maclennan of Rogart (Lib Dem)
Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab)
Lord Swinfen (Con)
Stewart Jackson MP (Con)
Lord Green of Deddington (Crossbench)
Sir Edward Leigh MP (Con)
Baroness Massey of Darwen (Lab)
Andrew Rosindell MP (Con)
Baroness Cumberlege (Con)
Lord Cormack (Con)
Lord Harrison (Lab)
Lord Vinson (Con)
Baroness Howarth of Breckland (Crossbench)
Baroness Blackstone (Lab)
Graham Allen MP (Lab)
Lord Kalms
Baroness Eaton (Con)
Baroness Falkner of Margravine (Lib Dem)
David T C Davies MP (Con)
Sir William Cash MP (Con)
Lord Warner (Lab)
Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead (Lab)
Lord Taverne (Lib Dem)
Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab)
Baroness Flather (Crossbench)
Lord Blencathra (Con)