Muslim Power and Control Wheel

Physical Violence

- Using Coercion & Threats: Threatening to marry another wife. Threatening “God-ordained” wife beating (4:34). Threatening to leave her without money. Threatening to spread the word she is an adulteress. Making her drop charges to preserve extended family’s reputation.

- Using Economic Abuse: Refusing to allow wife to get education or training. Refusing to let her get a job. Demanding she quit a job. Taking her entire paycheck while Islam allows her to keep it all. Hiding family income.

- Using Male Privilege: The husband’s dominance and inflexibility is exalted as Qur’ically mandated requiring obedience in all matters. Wife’s opinions, aspirations & plans are condemned as “Western” and un-Islamic. Children are verbally/physically abused as the “right” of Muslim father. Wife is encouraged to fear husband. Repeats weak Hadith about women bowing to men.

- Using Children: Children are told that they are beaten to prevent them from becoming too “American.” Father threatens to get custody from Islamic court, sends children overseas, marry them off young, or kidnap them. Children’s trauma symptoms are used as an excuse to batter wife. Father encourages children to insult & disrespect mother. Husband says he has to abuse mother to stop child abuse.

- Using Isolation: Husband says that as the “qawwamun” (manager) of his wife he has the God-given right to control her every movement, who she sees and talks to, what she thinks & what she reads. Wives are made to get permission to use the phone, go grocery shopping & visit parents. Even if their marriage contract gives her full mobility the husband ignores it.

- Minimizing, Denying & Blaming: Directing children to lie about/ trivialize the abuse. Denying the abuse by calling it “discipline.” Saying the wife “caused” the abuse. Telling the wife that divulging episodes of abuse equals violation of her Islamic responsibility to protect her husband’s privacy and that God will condemn her for it.

Sexual Violence

- Using Intimidation: Grotesquely dirtying her kitchen several times per day. Having the local imam tell the wife the abuse is her fault. Customs are disguised as religion. Hiding/destroying important documents. Taking all her jewelry & selling it. Apologizing to others for her disobedience. Collecting/displaying weapons. Stalking.

- Using Emotional Abuse: Beating/calling wife unfit Muslim mother. Making fun of her inadequate Islamic knowledge. Calling her names & calling her crazy. Making her believe that she is incapable of directing her own life. Telling abused women they must be quiet, docile & obedient to uphold family honor. Lying to her extended family in letters. Saying her lovemaking is inferior to Americans.

By Sharifa Alkhateeb, Adapted from the Duluth Model Peaceful Families Project P.O. Box 771 Great Falls, VA 22066 703.474.6870 www.peacefulfamilies.org