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The Truth About Muslim Marriage review: It's just a sign of the times

IF you got married in church then you probably went off to a side room immediately afterwards to "sign the register", thus making sure the state was as satisfied with your nuptials as God was.



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The Truth About Muslim Marriage hosted by Myriam Francoise

As The Truth About Muslim Marriage (C4) explained last night, it's the same in most Islamic countries.

If you were an imam and you failed to do the civic paperwork alongside the religious marriage ceremony called the “nikah”, then you could be looking at jail time.

It's also the same for Muslims in many European countries. You have your religious marriage do, whatever your religion is, and you do the legal stuff at the same time, so your marriage is legal.

Sadly, one of the few countries not to take this sensible approach is Britain.

radio/881520/I-m-A-Celebrity-2017-Rebekah- radio/882351/Coronation-Street-spoilers-



It is, as presenter Myriam Francois discovered, a thorny issue, bound up with the way different cultures mark and celebrate their matches.

Despite being very diverse in itself, Britain's Muslim community does not on the whole celebrate weddings at the mosque.

It's more common to have the nikah ceremony, and the obligatory party, at a venue such as a restaurant.

Currently, under British law, the civil-legal part of marriage can't be conducted there. At the same time – as a survey revealed – a staggering number of British Muslims don't know how important it is to have both.



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The show found that Muslim marriage in the UK is a thorny issue

Despite 99 per cent of women questioned being British-born, 60 per cent had not had a civil ceremony. In the eyes of British law, they're not officially married.

Francois meandered through the arguments for and against change. Some younger Muslims, for example, want things to stay the same.

It's quick and cheap to have a nikah, a religious divorce is equally convenient, so some couples use this as a way to have a series of relationships before finally settling down with "the one".

Others wonder why Britain hasn't addressed the issue before. As a rabbi pointed out during the programme, doing the state formalities alongside the religious is a way of saying "the state welcomes you as a..." (insert religion here). Don't we have a vested interest in Muslims being welcome?



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Others, like community activist Ana Khan, think the impetus should come from within.

"We need to own our own problem," she told a gathering of imams. In spite of that, the answer might come from without.

Australia, Canada, Scotland and Northern Ireland have invested legal powers of marriage in persons, rather than places, so an approved individual can marry you on a mountain top, if you like.

Whatever solution is eventually adopted, there's a lot of marriedyet-unmarried Muslims who need to get down the register office, pronto.
