

# Their Untold Stories: Behind Her Door

The following stories are fiction; however, they are not fabricated from imagination but derived from the experiences of girls and women worldwide. Contained in these stories are only some forms and examples of gender-based violence against women.

You must marry your cousin to keep the family name. Your father promised his brother that you will marry his son, and he will not take his word back.



## Fact:

Each year, an estimated 12 million girls aged under 18 marry against their will (UNICEF). **Child marriage** is a form of forced marriage. Remember, child marriage is gender-based violence. Save the children who are at risk of marriage by acknowledging that early marriage steals childhoods.

Do not worry dear, you have to be a good girl and do it!



## Fact:

More than 200 million girls and women alive today have experienced **female genital mutilation (FGM)**. FGM is a harmful procedure where some or all of a girl's vaginal parts are removed for non-medical reasons. This form of violence is usually performed on children and causes mental and physical effects. Although illegal in Canada, families can take their child for a Vacation Cutting, where the girl undergoes a FGM procedure outside of Canada. Remember, FGM is a crime against children and humanity.

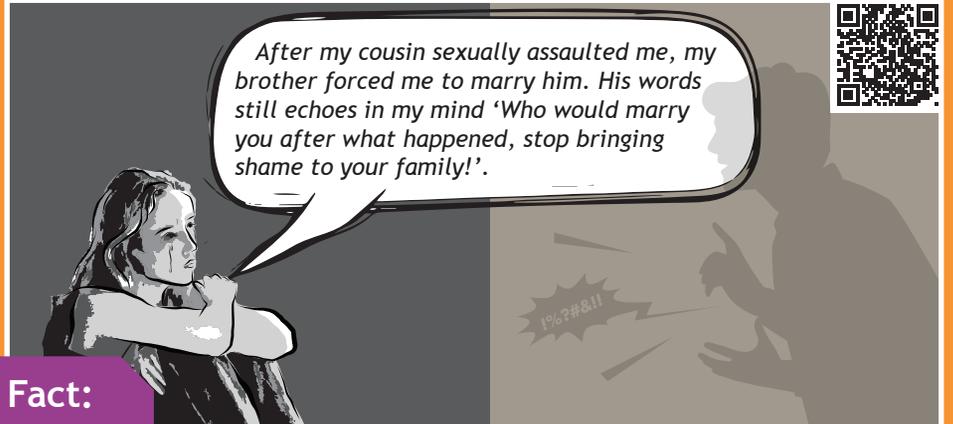
I can still remember what happened to me back home. After the protest, the police arrested the women participants and asked us to undergo virginity testing.



## Fact:

**Virginity testing** is a non-scientific practice of determining if a girl or woman has had sexual intercourse. This test can happen by touching or looking at women's genitals without their consent ostensibly as proof of virginity. In some countries, this practice can be required by family members, police or public health departments as a method to ensure women's virginity. Virginity testing is a human rights violation. This test cannot scientifically determine if consensual sexual activity has occurred. The physical, emotional and social impact of this test is beyond description.

After my cousin sexually assaulted me, my brother forced me to marry him. His words still echoes in my mind 'Who would marry you after what happened, stop bringing shame to your family!'.



## Fact:

**Honour-based violence** is built on a false patriarchal belief that women's bodies and actions are under male control to protect their family's honour. A victim may face violence or even death for a range of behaviours, including having a relationship with a male or, in more extreme situations, refusing forced marriage. This issue is not specific to any individual faith or culture and has been observed across various communities.

The memories of our bodies can tell a lot. We refused to leave our home during the occupation. We stood for our rights against five soldiers, but then our bodies were occupied upon refusal. Suddenly, the home that had held warm memories in every corner, held pain in every space.



## Fact:

**Rape and sexual violence** can be used as a method to terrorize entire communities by raping women's bodies regardless of women's age in **war spaces**. This crime causes deep emotional and physical pain to the women, families and communities and can lead to things like unwanted pregnancies or infections. The terrible effects of wartime rape persist long after the fighting stops and peace is declared.

I was told that I would be able to provide money for my family if I enter a sponsorship and come to Canada. However, when I arrived, I was forced by my sponsor to enter the sex trade.



## Fact:

**Human trafficking** is the exploitation of individuals for profit. Traffickers use various forms of control, including physical force, threats, and psychological manipulation, to maintain power over their victims. Sex trafficking is a human trafficking/crime where victims are recruited, transported, or held against their will for sexual exploitation.

