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Saudi child bride drops divorce from 80-year-old man

A 12-year-old girl in Saudi Arabia has withdrawn her request for a divorce from her 80-year-old husband.

The girl, from Qaseem province east of Riyadh, was married last September in return for a dowry of \$22,600 (£14,174) paid to her father.

She and her mother had asked a court to annul the marriage on the grounds the girl had been raped.

But now the girl has withdrawn her petition, saying she wants to respect her father's wishes.

"I agree to the marriage. I have no objection. This is in filial respect to my father and obedience to his wish," she was quoted as telling the court by the Okaz newspaper.

The girl's situation was made public in January when a journalist from the Al-Riyadh newspaper encountered the girl, and she begged the reporter to save her.

The lawyer appointed to help the girl said her mother had not informed him of her child's change of heart, it was reported.

'Right to childhood'

Saudi Arabia has no law against child marriage, but in April last year the Justice Minister said there should be increased regulation to prevent parents "selling off" their children.

The minister was speaking after the marriage of an eight-year-old to a 60-year-old man.

This latest case has attracted the attention of the Saudi royal family.

Princess Adela bint Abdullah, the daughter of King Abdullah bin Saud, said the marriage violated the child's rights.

"A child has the right to live her childhood and not be forced to get married. Even an adult would not accept that," Saudi media quoted her as saying.

Defenders of child marriage say the practice is part of Saudi culture.

Saudi Arabia implements an austere form of Sunni Islam that bans free association between the sexes and gives fathers the right to wed their children to whomever they deem fit.



There are calls in Saudi Arabia to regulate child marriage

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