

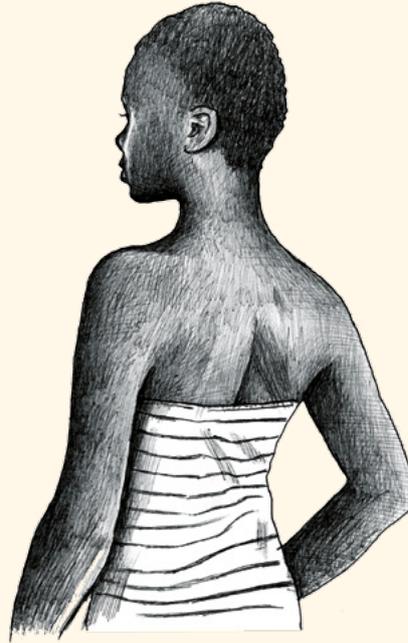
BURKINA FASO

Girls forced into marriage

ONE IN THREE GIRLS MADE TO MARRY OLDER MEN

Maria (not her real name) was just 13 when her father threatened to kill her if she refused to marry a 70-year-old man. She walked for nearly three days to seek refuge. One in three girls in Burkina Faso are married off before they turn 18. Some are as young as 11. They are expected to have as many children as their husbands want, regardless of their own wishes or the health risks brought about by early pregnancy. Once married, many are compelled to cook, clean, fetch water and work in the fields, dawn to dusk. Very few go to school. Some girls are doing all they can to escape forced marriages, despite huge pressure from their families and wider society.

+ www.amnesty.org.uk/marriage



When her father learned that she had fled, he asked her to go back to her husband's house

Note from Amnesty case file

SEND A SOLIDARITY CARD TO:

Burkina Faso Girls Solidarity
c/o Individuals at Risk
Amnesty International UK
Human Rights Action Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard
London EC2A 3EA

We will send your messages to our section in Burkina Faso; they will re-direct them to girls in shelters and shelter workers.

- + **Language:** French (preferred) or English
- + **Salutation:** Dear Young Women
- + **Suggested messages** (please keep the language simple):
 - 'I support your right to choose if and when you want to marry.'
 - 'You can and should be able to go to school!'
 - 'I support your right to live free from discrimination, coercion and violence.'
- + **And to shelter workers:** 'You are very brave to help girls and young women to be free from forced marriage. You are helping to ensure their human rights are not violated and we support you. You are not alone!'

CAN I

- Send a religious card or message?
- Send an Amnesty card or mention Amnesty?
- Include my name and address?

SEND AN APPEAL LETTER:

Call on the minister to stop forced and early marriage

Write to: Justice and Human Rights Minister
Burkina Faso
c/o Individuals at Risk
Amnesty International UK
Human Rights Action Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard
London EC2A 3EA

Owing to political unrest in Burkina Faso, letters should be sent to our office. We will deliver your letter when a new minister is in post.

Salutation: Dear Minister

In your letter: Urge the government to enforce and ensure the application of national laws and international obligations prohibiting forced and early marriage. Call on the authorities to set up more shelters and guarantee support services for victims of early and forced marriages. Please don't mention abortion as this is a sensitive question in Burkina Faso.