

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-D042
Title: Ending Child and Forced Marriage
Proposer: O'Neal, Ms. Yvonne
Topic: Human Rights, Marriage

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-D035 Support the Church of Pakistan Against Persecution

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

D042 - Ending Child and Forced Marriage

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: O'Neal, Ms. Yvonne

Endorsed by: Russell, Ms. Laura, Wong, Mr. Warren

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: Yes

Directs Dfms Staff: Yes

Directs Dioceses: Yes

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 07 - Social Justice & United States Policy

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention acknowledge the harm caused by forced marriages (marriages where one party does not consent, but is forced to marry), a human rights violation, and the harm caused by underage marriages (marriages of those under eighteen years of age), which rob children of their childhood and increase incidents of domestic violence and poverty; both disproportionately affecting women and girls globally; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church, with the assistance of the Office of Government Relations, support state and national policies that advocate for the minimum age to marry be eighteen, without exception and eliminate parental consent as an exception to marriage; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church support policies that end child and forced marriages, by supporting policies such as access to educational, social and economic opportunities for girls; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church call upon all members, congregations and dioceses to advocate for legislation at the state and federal levels that establishes eighteen as the minimum marriage age without exceptions; and be it further

Resolved, That Episcopal dioceses and organizations commit to create awareness, provide support for survivors, and promote legislation that protects individuals from coerced and forced marriages as well as underage marriages; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force to Study Household & Relationship Diversity considers the impact of child and forced marriage upon individuals and families.

Explanation

The concept of child marriage is new to the United States. States have traditionally regulated the age at which one can marry. Most states have chosen between ages 16-18, while several states have no minimum age. Many states allow for girls to marry at a different age than boys, and many do not regulate the age gap between marrying parties. Therefore, what might be considered statutory rape, or rape, becomes legal when parties marry. Ages also vary when a parent can consent to an underage marriage.

Legislation to end the practice of marrying before age 18, which is child marriage, is fairly new in the United States. As of April 2024, 12 states have banned underage marriages, with no exception: Delaware (2018), New Jersey (2018), Pennsylvania (2020), Minnesota (2020), Rhode Island (2021), New York (2021), Massachusetts (2022), Vermont (2023), Connecticut (2023), Michigan (2023), Washington (2024) and Virginia (2024). Research and statistics indicate that child and forced marriages are not isolated incidents in the United States, but rather represent a significant and ongoing challenge to social justice and the welfare of affected individuals. For more information about child marriage in the United States, please visit the website of the organization, Unchained At Last.

<https://www.unchainedatlast.org/laws-to-end-child-marriage/>

Child marriage qualifies as a form of gender-based violence. It is predominantly forced upon girls and is rooted in systemic gender disparities. Young girls who marry as children frequently suffer physical and mental trauma, including sexual assault, domestic abuse, and denial of their fundamental rights and prospects. Once married, they are forced out of school, and are usually trapped in a cycle of poverty and low wages. Child marriage strengthens damaging stereotypes about how women should behave and feeds a vicious cycle of prejudice. For the purpose of reducing gender-based violence and advancing gender equality, child marriage must be actively opposed.

Forced marriages are also part of this vicious cycle. Marriages are forced when one party is forced, coerced, or threatened into marrying someone they do not want to marry. The marriage can only take place when a parent or guardian consents to the marriage, over the objection of the person getting married. In some cases, these forced marriages are used to protect a rapist, who, when caught, will consent to marry their victim instead of being prosecuted. Many of these marriages have large age gaps. Those who are forced into marriages suffer a loss of educational prospects, health issues from early childbearing and domestic violence.

Please see the webinar, *Gender-Based Violence Spotlight: The Race to End Child Marriage by 2030*, <https://vimeo.com/890607837>, produced by the proposer for the Diocese of New York Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Note: this resolution and/or its explanation contains external references, such as URLs of websites, that may not be in the required languages of General Convention. Because of copyright restrictions, the General Convention cannot provide translations. However, your web browser may be able to provide a machine translation into another language. If you need assistance with this, please contact gc.support@episcopalchurch.org.



Resolution Number: 2015-D035
Title: Support the Church of Pakistan Against Persecution
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church express continued solidarity with the Church of Pakistan (United) in this time of oppression of religious minorities in their country; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church call upon the congregations and members of The Episcopal Church to learn about the realities of the Church in Pakistan and the oppression of religious minorities in that country, and to pray purposely and specifically for the Church of Pakistan (United); and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church call upon the congregations and dioceses of The Episcopal Church to enter into direct partnerships with the Church of Pakistan (United) including visits to provide active engagement and support for the persecuted Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church call upon the Government of Pakistan to ensure adequate protections for all religious minorities in Pakistan; that it take immediate action to discharge its international human rights obligations, specifically with respect to the prevention of the abduction, forced conversion to Islam, and forced marriage of young women from minority religious communities; and that it bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the Global Relations Office of the Episcopal Church, including the United Nations special consultative status granted to it in 2014, and other offices and agencies of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society to utilize all measures at their disposal to advocate for the protection of religious, gender, and other minorities with the Government of Pakistan and international agencies; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns (or other commission, committee or task-group as assigned by Executive Council) to report to the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church, no later than December 31, 2016, on the work of the Episcopal Church in these undertakings with respect to the Church of Pakistan, including the status of the actions contemplated by this and previous resolutions of General Convention pertaining to the plight of the Church of Pakistan, with such report being shared with the Church of Pakistan.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 789.