

Dad's Arrest Exposes Support Network Behind Alleged Honor Killers

by Phyllis Chesler



The FBI-led Dallas Violent Crimes Task Force [abused the girls](#) starting when they were around 8 and 9. He routinely monitored and stalked them and threatened their lives. Their mother, Texas-born Patricia ("Tissie") Said, denied Yaser's violence. She also persuaded her daughters to [go to jail.](#)"

Guns were everywhere at home. Tissie, who married Yaser when she was 15, said she thought it was just a joke. Walls were punched, computers and desks broken, eyes blackened, cheeks reddened—braces embedded into lips. Things escalated when Amina refused to marry an unknown, much older man in Egypt for the sake of her father's honor—and bank account. Things *really* escalated when their father learned that they had Christian boyfriends, one of whom was Black and Hispanic. Now, Yaser viewed his daughters as "sluts" and "whores," whom he must kill.

Late in 2007, 18-year-old Amina and 17-year-old Sarah finally ran away with two friends, boys, who wanted to help save their lives. Strangely, Tissie went along, possibly in order to spy on them for Yaser. After she returned home, Tissie implored her daughters to come back. She assured them that Yaser would not harm them.

They returned—and within hours, on Jan. 1, 2008, Yaser allegedly shot them to death in his taxicab. One of the dying girls called the police, said that her father had shot them both, and that they were dying.

Later that year, the FBI [Ten Most Wanted list](#). Mustafaa Carroll, then a representative of the Dallas Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) office, condemned this categorization as for potentially [told reporters](#). Describing him as an “honor killer” might limit their chances of catching him or might prejudice his trial.

But motive ought to matter, if not for a prosecution, then to help understand the threat too many Muslim women face.

In a 1999 case in Cleveland, a Palestinian-American woman, [used the phrase](#) “honor killing” which was deemed “inflammatory,” “prejudicial” and “anti-Arab.” Local Muslim Arab communities denounced the phrase as a [“interviewed female blamed](#) his sisters’ deaths on their boyfriends. He grabbed the microphone at a school Memorial Celebration for Amina and Sarah and said that the “boyfriends killed my sisters. They pulled the trigger, not my dad. My dad is the victim here. They knew the rules. They broke them.”

What could these girls have done to save their lives? No school official or social service agency intervened to remove them from their home, the police had not been summoned, their mother was either unwilling to, or incapable of, protecting them.

This same pattern applies in other honor killing cases in

North America. Girls are normatively beaten, psychologically humiliated, and closely monitored in order to render them helpless and compliant. [to save her](#).

In Canada, 19-year-old Zainab Shafia, her 17-year-old sister Sahar, 13-year-old sister Geeti, and Mohammed Shafia's first wife Rona Mohammed Omar, all [convicted](#) of their murders.

In a similar case in Arizona, Iraqi-American Noor Al-Maleki's family considered her too Western. And like the Said sisters, she refused to remain in an arranged marriage to a man in Iraq. In 2009, her father [most](#) of my [studies](#) at the *Middle East Quarterly*.

The local Dallas newspapers covered the case; Dallas AP sent the story out but it was not picked up nationally. The mainstream media was – and still is – reluctant to expose criminal behavior if the perpetrator is a Muslim. Only conservative blogs, *The Washington Times*, and FOX News featured it. FOX also aired a documentary, "[The Price of Honor](#)."

According to FBI spokesman Jason Wandel, the hunt for Yaser Said was a coast-to-coast operation that also involved an international search. It was a serious manhunt which, according to the FBI's Dallas Special Agent in Charge Matthew DeSarno and Irving Police Chief Jeff Spivey, [including mothers](#), be arrested and tried as accomplice-collaborators in an honor killing?

How should North American teachers, school nurses, and social service agencies respond when they see a Muslim girl coming to school bruised and with a black eye? What resources do we have to protect children in danger from their own families?

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