



No Safe Place Murdered by Our father Bekhal Mahmud with Dr Hannana Siddiqui

‘My life will always be in danger. My beautiful sister Banaz Mahmud was murdered in an “honour killing” ordered by our father and uncle. If those evil men find me, they will kill me too.’

Praise for *No Safe Place*:

‘Banaz’s courageous and campaigning sister, Bekhal, and the distinguished legal reformer Dr Hannana Siddiqui here document the full horror of the violence which can be experienced by women in our minority communities . . . no cultural justification should be made for so-called crimes of honour.’ Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

‘This remarkable book by Bekhal and co-writer Hannana Siddiqui, reveals their awesome courage and compels us to ask: How can this be happening in Britain? Why does it go on? When will it end? Can we feminists be as brave and uncompromising . . . and build up momentum to stop culturally sanctioned crimes against females? It is time.’ Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, author and journalist

‘Bekhal Mahmud’s story of how she escaped being murdered by her own family is a shocking indictment of a community that prized patriarchy over life. The fact that Bekhal’s sister had to die before the authorities took Bekhal’s pleas for help seriously shames a nation. This is a brave and troubling anatomy of a twenty-first-century “honour killing” and the long fight for justice.’ Robert Verkaik, author of *Jihadi John*

‘We already know the end of Banaz Mahmud’s story. Now, her sister, Bekhal, tells us the beginning. Heartbreaking and compelling, it’s a tough read but one that must be shared.’ Joy Kluver, author of *Last Seen, Broken Girls, Left for Dead*

‘I was immediately struck by her courage and both moved and inspired by her unflinching spirit. Bekhal’s strength of character is shown on every page of this book. The resilience she shows in the face of abuse is inspiring . . . Anyone who wants to understand how “honour” culture operates – and the effect it has on women and girls – needs to read this heartbreaking and compelling book.’ Deeyah Khan, director of the documentary *Banaz: A Love Story*

‘A heart-breaking, powerful and crucially important story from an incredibly brave woman.’ Jess Phillips MP

‘A staggering story, beautifully written! And an important insight into both paralysis and heroic resistance . . . from the first pages, I felt myself gasping with the shock of it, and yet driven to read on, and on . . . takes us to the geopolitics of fundamentalist faith and power, to visceral fright, resistance and to the wonderful Southall Black Sisters.’ Beatrix Campbell OBE, writer and activist



'Bekhal Mahmud is one of the bravest people I've ever met. In the face of constant threats to her own life, and angry exclusion by the rest of her family, she held fast to the memory of her beloved sister, murdered on the orders of their own father. Banaz chose love, and died for it; in defending her, Bekhal chose the path of true honour. Her vivid account of the price both sisters paid is raw and heartbreaking' Gwyneth Hughes, screenwriter of ITV series *Honour*

'Written from witness protection, this is a heartbreaking & incredibly important book telling the true story of the death of [Bekhal Mahmud's] sister Banaz in a so-called "honour killing" & detailing the quest for justice that followed. Essential reading for everybody' Laura Bates, founder of the Everyday Sexism Project

Bekhal Mahmud was one of six siblings from a Sunni Muslim family in Iraqi Kurdistan who sought a new life as asylum seekers and arrived in London in 1998.

When Bekhal's father tried to force her into an arranged marriage at 15, she ran away. This caused her father, Mahmud Babakir Mahmud, to lose respect within the Kurdish community and Bekhal became the target of an 'honour killing' and her younger sisters Banaz and Payzee were quickly married off to restore the family's reputation.

When Banaz left her husband, claiming he'd beaten and raped her, and wanted to re-marry to her boyfriend, her father decided this shame to the family meant Banaz must die. Within weeks, she had vanished.

Her body was finally discovered, crammed into a suitcase and buried in a garden in Birmingham. Banaz, aged 20, had been raped and killed in a sickening plot orchestrated by her father and uncle.

Still fearing for her own life, Bekhal bravely faced her father and uncle in court – making her the first daughter in British legal history to give evidence against family members in an honour killing trial – and won justice for her beloved sister Banaz.

Bekhal now has a new identity after entering the police witness protection programme. She lives in terror of her father's release from jail. This is her story.

AUTHORS

Bekhal Mahmud is admired for giving prosecution evidence against her father, uncle and male cousins for the honour killing of her sister, Banaz Mahmud. Her relatives were all convicted of murder or related crimes. She is the first daughter in the UK to do so. Bekhal also faced threats and attempts to kill her after she left home as a teenager due to abuse and pressures to have a child marriage. She is now on a witness protection scheme, but still in fear of her life. Bekhal has given numerous media interviews, including in an Emmy award-winning documentary, *Banaz, A Love Story*. She was also depicted in the popular ITV drama *Honour*, which starred Keeley Hawes. Bekhal is campaigning to introduce a Banaz's Law to prevent cultural excuses for murder or honour violence. In 2011, Bekhal won the True Honour Award for her courage in court and campaigning. Dr Hannana Siddiqui is an award-winning author, expert and activist on violence against black and ethnic minority women and girls at Southall Black Sisters.

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