

Dawood had already been living in Canada for fifteen years, working as an engineer prior to their marriage. He comes from a powerful and influential family with ties to his home country's government secret service. Dawood sponsored Elham to immigrate to Canada in 1995, a year after they married. There is a significant age gap between Elham and her spouse; she is over twenty years younger than he is. Elham said that he wanted to marry a younger woman so that he could 'train and control' his wife.

#### Settlement in Canada

Upon arrival in Canada, Elham wanted to return to school to complete her dentistry education. Dawood didn't support her to do this. He told her that he wanted her to look after the home and start their family. Elham was responsible for all aspects of childcare, helping the children with schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and medical appointments. Elham has one sister living in Canada but the rest of her family remained in their home country.

#### Domestic Violence

Soon after marriage, Elham realized that Dawood was having a long-term romantic relationship with a Canadian woman. In fact, Dawood brought the woman on Elham's and Dawood's honeymoon, ostensibly as a photo- and videographer. This relationship continued throughout their marriage and the woman had a key to all three matrimonial homes over the years. She was also a title holder on Elham's and Dawood's first matrimonial home alongside the couple. Elham was expected to live with this arrangement. She was isolated in the home and her spouse controlled whom she socialized with. She did not have a key to the house and could not come and go as she pleased.

From the beginning of their marriage, Elham suffered significant abuse at Dawood's hand. Dawood would drink heavily, swear and yell at her, punch her and throw her around. He would threaten to kill her and said that 'going to jail would be worth every minute if she were dead'. He would tell the children to tell their mother that they hated her. The children witnessed the ongoing violence and they would often plead with their father to stop. Elham thought about contacting the police, but she did not as her spouse told her that he would send the children out of the country, and she would never see them again. As Dawood held the children's passports, had family in high positions, and Dawood himself worked in the airline industry, this threat was very real.

Dawood would constantly interrogate the children and ask them what Elham did during the day and who she talked with. The children were not comfortable providing this information about their mother and would not comply. As punishment, Dawood would then take away their toys and games. He would become angry and yell at the children. He was overly aggressive with them, berating them for not meeting his expectations in both sports and school. He was inconsistent in his behaviour as there were other times that he would bring them gifts. As a result of this unpredictability, the children were afraid of him.

Elham disclosed the abuse to her family doctor and he began to treat her for the symptoms she presented. Her mental health has been managed with the help of medication over the years. Elham stated that, as time passed, she became wiser, stronger, and less tolerant to the abuse. Unfortunately, her spouse reacted negatively to her emerging resilience and the abuse only escalated.

The children were instructed not to call her 'mother'. She describes being treated like a servant in her own home. Elham had no money of her own and Dawood did not provide her with any financial support. Elham started working part-time as a real estate assistant when the children were in school. She had previously earned her real estate license, but Dawood did not let her renew it. He did not want her to work and wanted her to relinquish her wages directly to him. Dawood had built up a significant debt of \$600,000 from risky financial decisions and financial fraud, which included applying for thirty-six credit cards under Elham's name. Throughout her marriage, Dawood would approach Elham with a postnuptial agreement that stated he would have custody of the kids and she would pay him a certain amount if