

Saudi presenter shows beaten face

A TV presenter who says she was beaten by her husband has allowed newspapers to show pictures of her swollen face to highlight domestic abuse.

Rania al-Baz said her husband, Mohammed al-Fallatta, beat her so hard earlier this week that he broke her nose and fractured her face in 13 places.

She is recovering in hospital. Police are looking for Mr Fallatta, an unemployed singer.

Reuters news agency says he faces charges of attempted murder.

Ms Baz's mother told Saudi media that Mr Fallatta beat her daughter regularly.

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Rania al-Baz

This time, the mother is quoted as saying, he became infuriated when Ms Baz answered the telephone.

After beating her, Mr Fallatta took her to hospital and fled, her mother reportedly added.

"I want to use what happened to me to draw attention to the plight of women in Saudi Arabia," Ms Baz said.

Every morning for the past six years, Ms Baz has been the smiling face of a family programme on Saudi television. She is well-known and loved in the kingdom.

The BBC's correspondent Kim Ghattas says this is probably the first time ever that a case of domestic violence has received media coverage in Saudi Arabia.

It is a deeply conservative society, where Islamic Sharia law is strictly enforced and where honour and appearances are hugely important.

The presence of problems such as domestic violence, rape, paedophilia or Aids is often simply not acknowledged our correspondent adds.

'Husband's right'

"It is considered a husband's rights that his wife should obey him," Abeer Mishkhas, of the Saudi English-language newspaper Arab News, told BBC News Online.

"This can involve coercion or violence, and we know that the majority of cases of this kind go unreported and unnoticed."

More and more Saudi women go to civil courts to request divorces on grounds of violence, Ms Mishkhas says.

But they are still not allowed to vote, drive, own a business or travel without permission from a male guardian.

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/3631743.stm

Published: 2004/04/16 13:42:01 GMT

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