

حوائین زین اش مسلم قوانین
Women Living Under Muslim Laws
النساء فی ظل قوانین المسلمین
Femmes sous lois musulmanes

International Solidarity Network

WLUML 2016 Annual Report



Homa Hoodfar, after 112 days of incarceration in Evin Prison in Iran returns home

About WLUML

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) was established in 1984. It was formed in response to three urgent cases of women being denied rights, under laws said to be 'Muslim'. Today, the network spreads to over 70 countries.

WLUML was founded and is led by women's groups and individuals with mainly Muslim backgrounds in the Global South. Our purpose is to strengthen women's struggles for equality and to increase access to their rights, especially within Muslim contexts. It has played a critical role for women who either lack information regarding their official legal rights (e.g., those derived from personal status laws and civil codes), or have limited access to information that would let them challenge such laws. Deliberate policies of misinformation, exacerbated by existing monopolies over matters relating to Islam, leads to a knowledge gap that is often not only re-enforced but also widened. Under the rising threat posed by politico-religious fundamentalists, WLUML's support for women who resist gender inequality has become increasingly crucial.

We are a transnational network for information, solidarity and support. WLUML has nearly three decades of experience in bringing together women's collective strength and voices, and we continue to gather different analyses and strategies to advance gender equality within Muslim contexts. WLUML serves as a solidarity network, a think tank, and a campaign and a lobbying force for activists around the world.

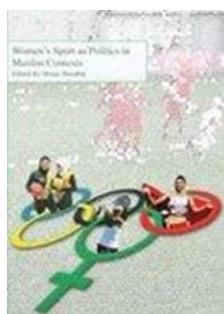


Principal activities 2016

Women Living under Muslim Law's major programme Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation (WELDD) ended at year-end 2015, and reporting on the programme completed in June 2016. WLUML did not have any major collective field programmes in 2016. However, it continued to have discussion groups, carried on networking and make the existing WLUML and our sister organization's resources available to those who requested them, as well as making these available on site. It continued with Publications, Communications, and had one key advocacy campaign.

Publications

The book 'Women's Sport as Politics in Muslim Contexts' was finalized this year. The plan for publicly launching the publication in several cities before the 2016 Olympics was altered due to the arrest in Iran, of its editor, Homa Hoodfar, aiming to preserve her safety as the publication was used as a proof of her disrespect of Islamic Culture in Iran. This book was the result of three separate workshops on women's access to public sphere and clothing, and is part of WLUML's research and publication series on 'Dress Codes and Modes: Politics of Women's Clothing in Muslim Contexts' - which were carried out during 2008, 2011 and 2014. These workshops led to the development and collation of case-studies, as 'Women's Sport as Politics in Muslim Contexts' in 2015, the book was published on the WLUML website as a soft copy and the printed version on Amazon in 2016. The two book launches that were planned in London and one in Montreal, for media attention given that the Olympics were that year, were cancelled in order not to draw attention to Homa's work in this area while she was in prison in Iran.



Strategic Plan

In 2015, based on the feedback from our networkers and a strategic report, the board had decided that new work, publications, projects and programmes should be developed only after a full strategic process had taken place in order to respond to the new situation and need on the ground particularly in MENA region.

The development of a strategic plan (2016-19) took place in 2015, and a board meeting took place in Lahore in December 2015 to review the plan. At the meeting it was agreed that the plan should be reviewed by an international and younger active networkers. This strategic meeting was planned to take place in 2016, but was postponed due to unforeseen circumstances (see below), and was re-scheduled for June 2017. See 2017 section, summary of meeting.

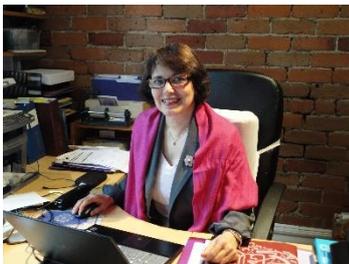
Statements and Alerts

Through www.wluml.org and www.weldd.com websites, in 2016, received over 26 million hits. On the website key stories included an interview with Afghan activist Noorjahan Akbar, and a widely-cited article by Marieme Helie-Lucas "Eurocentrism as a Fig Leaf", which generated a lot of buzz amongst the media.

Statements and Alerts: We released a statement of condemnations:

- Against the January 20th terrorist attacks against media organizations in Afghanistan. We condemned the attack on media freedom and civil society, and offered condolences to the victims.
- An urgent appeal on behalf of Nazra for Feminist Studies. This appeal was addressed to President Al-Sisi. The appeal expressed concern over the summoning, threatened arrest and prosecution of staff of Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Nazra for Feminist Studies and the United Group. And the arbitrariness of the summon for the Director of Nazra; the threats to freeze the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, summons and travel bans on their Director; threats to freeze the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights; and other drastic measures taken by the government to curtail civil society. WLUMML mobilized support from across Muslim contexts and internationally. This was important in two ways, firstly to send a signal to the Egyptian regime that they were watched and their undemocratic behaviour did not go unnoticed, secondly for the women activists to know that they have the support of the wider transnational community.
- A WLUMML action alert to our networkers on the arrest of Homa Hoodfar. This action alert contained a list of officials to direct letters of support to, and contained samples of letters to send to Iranian, Canadian, and Irish authorities demanding immediate action. It also included a social media toolkit to facilitate an online campaign of her release.
- A WLUMML statement a month after Homa Hoodfar's arrest, detailing the current facts and urging the Iranian authorities to release her immediately.

Campaign to free Homa Hoodfar



In 2016 WLUMML was part of an international campaign that included many UN Rapporteurs, the Canadian government and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Association of Women in Development The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Amnesty International, and many HR and academic organisations & individuals, to free Homa Hoodfar (). Homa, a professor of anthropology, and WLUMML's long-standing networker and board member was committed to research and publication in the service of gender equality. She was the chair of WLUMML's publications committee, and was responsible for the coordination of the Strategic meeting due to take place in in May 2016. However due to her imprisonment, this meeting was postponed (as referred to earlier).

On the 9th of March, Homa was placed under house arrest in Tehran, Iran, then without due legal procedure, she was taken to Iran's notorious Evin prison, under the claim of writing feminist literature to undermine the government, and suspicion of being a MI6 and CIA spy.

Homa was incarcerated in Evin prison for 112 days, in incommunicado and denied access to her lawyer and her family. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/10/homa-hoodfar-canadian-iranian-academic-imprisonment>. WLUMML was intensely aware of the Iranian regime sensitivity towards Homa's long-term association with WLUMML, and carefully considered what would be the most effective way to advocate for her release. Much of WLUMML's collective effort in 2016 was directed to being part of the international campaign, which comprised of

academics, women's rights activists, UN rapporteurs, Canadian government officials. WLUML supported this by helping to mobilize support, writing letters & statements through the WLUML network, to have Homa freed from Evin. After six months of incarceration, Homa was finally released on the 26 of September with the support of Canadian and Omani governments. WLUML members and Transnational feminist movements in North and South as well as many academic associations and human rights organization celebrated her release.



She spent the next few months giving interviews & advocating for the release of other prisoner of conscious, particularly Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliff a British-Iranian mother of a two-year-old daughter, whom she shared a cell with for a little while and Narges Mohammadi, A prominent Iranian human rights activist who was taken seriously ill after being detained by the authorities has been sentenced to 11 years in jail.



WLUML is acutely aware, even at the time of writing that many other innocent people remain imprisoned at Evin (for Nazanin it is coming up to two years), that are subject to arbitrary charges made against them without transparency and with lack of process.

WELDD resources

Although the ‘Women’s Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation’ (WELDD) programme ended in 2015, the website remains a valuable resource. The WLUML-WELDD programme capacity built women rights activists mainly from the global south, and hosted workshops on political-participation and challenging Cultural Violence against Women (CVAW). The website www.weldd.org saw 15,500 visits, with 86.7% new users and 13.3% being returning users, meaning an increased interest in the website, which was attracting newer visitors instead of the same ones coming back repeatedly. Total page views were 24,389. The most popular uploads in 2016 were “Sonita: Brides for Sale”, an Afghan rap performance, by Sonita Alizadeh. This showed her experience as a young girl who escaped being sold as a child bride. The other popular uploads were “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy”. And “Feminism is for Everybody,” by Bell Hooks on what feminism is and what its different facets are.

As WELDD activities completed by end 2015, more project reports and stories were uploaded onto www.weldd.org. One such resource was from Justice for Iran - a WLUML-WELDD’s CVAW partner project.

Child Marriage: A Neglected form of Violence Against Women and Children

In Iran, multiple forms of CVAW exist e.g. stoning, lashing, flogging, execution - for committing zina, or adultery. A less-talked-about form of CVAW in Iran is that of child, early and forced marriage. While early marriage takes place in many of the MENA and Asian regions, in Iran legally, a girl can be married at 13 (or under certain condition even earlier) and a boy at 15, and still the guardian can marry girls off younger (9 years of age) if he obtains court permissions. Justice For Iran (JFI) Project on problem Early Child marriage in Iran aimed to train at least 20 women (both outside and inside Iran) in campaigning and working with UN mechanisms, lobbying UN Special Rapporteurs and governments and reaching out to a wide public via online campaigns against forced marriage, creating, in effect, awareness on a national level. The project included research, which resulted in the production of a report on Child Marriage to raise awareness at UN level “Shadow Report on Child Marriage” http://justice4iran.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/JFI-Girl-Marriage-in-Iran-EN.Final_.pdf. ‘Stolen Lives, Empty Classrooms’. In March 2014, the report was submitted to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Iran – and achieved six states making recommendations at the UPR, and the Deputy President of Women and Family Affairs called marriages under the age of 13 unacceptable. See link above and the report can be found on JFI and WELDD websites.

WLUML Virtual Office

2016 was the first year of the WLUML virtual office, and WLUML’s feminist library collection was launched at the School of Oriental and African Studies, in London, in February 2016.

Finance and Funding 2016

Please see WLUML website for the WLUML 2016 Audited Accounts.