

WLUML / NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010

حوالين زيير اش مسلم قوانين
Women Living Under Muslim Laws
النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes



THE 4th WLUML FEMINIST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE 2009

The 4th WLUML Feminist Leadership Institute took place in Dakar, Senegal, from 09-20 November, 2009. The conference provided capacity-building and leadership skills while encouraging global solidarity and networking among women from diverse Muslim countries and communities. Additionally, for the first time the Institute was bilingual (English/French), allowing for a wide variety of participants from various parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the Institute was to reclaim feminism and enhance the effectiveness of the participants' local organisations, thereby contributing to the capacity of the network itself. It enabled emerging activists (including young women leaders as well as more experienced women who have linked up with the network more recently) to further the work carried out by WLUML over the past 25 years.

STRATEGIES

The WLUML Feminist Leadership Institute sought to reclaim feminism by:

- looking at our own roots and histories by focusing on prominent historical feminist figures in Muslim countries and communities;
- showing the wide scope of feminist theories and activities that currently exist in Muslim countries and communities;
- explaining various strategies which can lead to our common goals of the promotion and protection of women's rights, including the use of human rights frameworks and religious interpretations;
- empowering participants by demystifying the various sources of control over women's lives, including colonial, customary, and religious laws and customs.

Additionally, various training topics were covered, including:

- Sexuality and sexual rights:
- Physical, cultural, social, political forms of violence against women:
- Demystifying Muslim laws commonly known as Shari'a:
- Addressing fundamentalisms:

• International, regional and national instruments to promote gender equality and women's rights:

• Institutional Development and Essential Skills:

OUTCOMES

Participants brought to the fourth WLUML Feminist Leadership Institute their own experiences as women's rights activists and defenders of women's human rights, and built new alliances.

WLUML hopes to have created an environment of mutual learning, engagement, and the encouragement of new networking linkages and friendships.

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EDITORIAL AND SOLIDARITY

EDITORIAL

SPRING 2010

Ban on the Burqa and the Minaret, and the Statue of the African Renaissance in Senegal.

One could ask why associate such contrasting symbols in the editorial? A French parliamentary commission carried out an inquiry, from autumn 2009 to January 2010, into the burqa, (or full-face veil) in order to consider a ban on its appearance in public spaces in France, on the basis that this symbol of Muslim feminine identity is incompatible with the French Republic's 1901 law of laïcité.

In November 2009, the Swiss voted in a referendum, 59 % in favour, of forbidding the building of new minarets on its national territory. Finally, in Senegal, for several months, President Wade's Statue of the African renaissance, which represents a couple with their child, has been provoking the anger of Muslim religious leaders on the pretext that Islam prohibits representations of the human form.

The debates surrounding these symbols unfold at the same time against a background of religious critiques. They do not reveal the 'clash of civilisations' envisaged by Samuel Huntington, but they situate themselves at the heart of renewed political games in a reaffirmed context of secularism.

In France, in the name of national identity, one condemns the burqa worn by women because of social pressure or a reclaiming of identity. The Swiss, in their turn, feared the expansion of Islam practised by migrant communities. And in Senegal, one takes advantage of the half-dressed female form to brandish an Islamic prohibition and oppose the diktat of the President. For all these symbols, religion is a source of political escalation and power relations that stir up tensions and for which women's bodies are often the weapons of choice.

Fatou Sow

Coordinator, WLUMI International
Coordination Office, London

SOLIDARITY

MALAYSIA

Kartika released, caning sentence postponed.

24/8/2009: On 20 August, the Syariah High Court in the Malaysian state of Pahang Shariah Court ordered that Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno be remanded at the Kajang women's prison in the state of Selangor from Monday, 24 August. Madam Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno, 32, had been sentenced to six strokes of the cane and fined RM5,000 (approximately US\$ 1,400) after she pleaded guilty to consuming beer two years ago at a hotel in Pahang. Madam Kartika has since been released, but the sentence of caning is reportedly still due to be carried out.

www.wlumi.org/node/5425

PAKISTAN

Urgent need to repeal Blasphemy Laws

26/8/2009: Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUMI) International Solidarity Network calls for the government of Pakistan to repeal its laws on blasphemy. The urgent need for law reform has been highlighted by the recent deadly attacks on a Christian community in Punjab, Pakistan, whose members were accused of desecrating the Qur'an. Members of a banned Islamist group, Sipah-i-Sahaba, took the law into their own hands and it is reported that policemen present did not try to control the mob and protect the citizens.

www.wlumi.org/node/5426

SUDAN

Flogging sentence dropped and fine paid against Hussein's will

7/9/2009: Lubna Hussein was released after a day in prison when the government backed Journalists Union paid her fine. They did so without her consent. It is believed the government hopes that by closing this case, the pressure to repeal the discriminatory laws will die down. The sentence of flogging was dropped in the case of Lubna Hussein who was charged under article 152 (Indecent and Immoral Acts) of the 1991 Sudanese Penal Code for wearing trousers in a public place. However, the guilty verdict has not been overturned and she had to choose between paying a fine of 500 Sudanese pounds or facing one month in jail. On Monday evening, Lubna Hussein was taken to jail to begin her sentence. Ms. Hussein did not want to lend any legitimacy to the verdict by paying the fine, and had intended to appeal the guilty verdict in both the Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court.

www.wlumi.org/node/5429

“ For the past 17 years polygamy has effectively been legal in Canada ”



CANADA

Charges against Polygamist leader dropped

4/12/2009: On 23 September 2009 the charges against Winston Blackmore and James Oler were dropped and the British Columbia (B.C.) Supreme Court ruled that the second appointed prosecutor's decision not to proceed with a prosecution was final and binding. Therefore, for the past 17 years, polygamy has effectively been legal in British Columbia because the B.C. government has consistently refused to prosecute polygamists fearing that the law (Sec. 293 of the Criminal Code) may be unconstitutional.

www.wluml.org/node/5735

ACEH

Civil society groups advocate for repeal of Qanun Jinayah (Islamic Criminal Legal Code)

18/12/2009: The Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) international solidarity network and the Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women! ([HYPERLINK "http://www.stop-killing.org/"](http://www.stop-killing.org/) SKSW Campaign) join their allies in Indonesia in continuing to call for the repeal of a law (or 'qanun') passed by the Aceh Legislative Council (DPRD) on Monday 14 September 2009, that expands the range of violent punishments for alleged moral and sexual transgressions, including stoning to death for "adultery" and 100 lashes for homosexuality.

www.wluml.org/node/5796

SAUDI ARABIA

Sentence on 75-year-old woman not yet carried out

8/1/2010: The Hail Emirate has received official orders to implement the recent sentence handed down against the defendants in the case of Khamisa Sawadi, issued by members of the Committee to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice in the City of Shamli (170 kilometers south of Hail), which was known in the media as 'The case of the elderly woman of Shamli'. Saudi sources have confirmed to Emirati newspaper, Gulf News, that the woman is still in her house and the sentence has not been carried out yet. The woman, identified as Syrian national Khamisa Mohammad Sawadi, along with two Saudi Arabian men known only as Fahd and Hadyan were found guilty in March 2009 of being in the company of members of the opposite sex who are not close relatives.

www.wluml.org/node/5832

IRAN

Call for release of human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience

8/1/2010: The International Solidarity network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, joins civil society groups and organisations such as Amnesty International, The Feminist school, The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran and The Observatory in condemning the recent wave of arrests of over 18 women's rights activists and the harsh sentences passed on three journalists in December 2009 and January 2010.

www.wluml.org/node/5838

“ women's bodies are often the weapon of choice ”



CAMPAIGNS

LAUNCH

SUDAN / RAPE LAW CAMPAIGN

**Launch of the 149 Alliance Rape Law Campaign
Khartoum**

The 149 Alliance is a national coalition that aims to reform the rape law in Sudan. The rape law of the Sudan Criminal Act of 1991 is one of many unjust laws that are applied in Sudan and undermine people's rights.

The 149 Alliance received training in alternative with 'Andulus Centre for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies' media to enable them to have more access to people in and outside Sudan. The training enabled the 149 Alliance to use twitter, Facebook, and the blogosphere as tools for the campaign. The training also covered other types of written media, teaching the Alliance how to attract newspapers to the campaign

The launch of the campaign took place on 24 January 2010 and was attended by more than seventy-five participants including lawyers, Police Academy representatives, social workers, psychologists, academicians, a UN representative, Parliamentarians, political party representatives, women activists, media representatives, Ambassadors, the Child and Family Unit/Ministry of Interior, teachers, and Judges. A press release about the launch was issued in both Arabic and English newspapers the next day.

The Sudanese 149 Alliance Rape Law Campaign signals a renewed relationship between women's groups, representatives of the state and judiciary, working together to end this gross injustice towards victims of rape.

For more info see:
www.suwepmovement.org/pdfs/149AllianceCampaign.pdf

INTERVIEW

SUDAN / FAHIMA A. HASHIM

**Interview with Fahima A. Hashim
Director of Salmah Women's
Resource Centre**

Antonia: How will the involvement of key Sudanese political figures assist the campaign to reform rape laws in Sudan?

Fahima: The involvement of the political party leaders is essential to us in the period leading up to the elections in April 2010; their commitment will be considered and will give more weight to the campaign. It will help if they insert the rape reform issue into their election programme and then we can put more pressure on them later. Furthermore, they are aware of the need for reform of all the anti-democratic laws, and the criminal law of 1991 is one of them.

A: Considering the restrictive nature of the Sudanese media, in what ways are The 149 Alliance planning to raise public awareness of the proposed changes to the rape law?

F: We have already launched the campaign in the newspapers, including

two dailies in Arabic and English (Ahdath, and the Citizen). We try to use alternative media as well, such as Facebook, and websites such as Sudanese online, Sudan for all, etc., if we face any refusal from the mainstream media. We are also opting to have a satellite TV show, and FM radio programme to share our campaign with a wider public.

A: Have 'The 149 Alliance' encountered opposition to their campaign from other women's groups?

F: No, especially with the increase of child rape cases, most of which have been highlighted in newspapers.

A: What impact will the proposed changes in the law have on the daily lives of women in Sudan?

F: The impact of this campaign on women will be in the form of society taking a step towards social change, justice, and women's awareness of their rights; it will also enable women and mothers to take their cases to court, to access legal aid, counselling and other rights. The punishment for rapists will be clearer, and less ambiguous. The awareness-raising on women's rights issues will be highlighted.

Antonia Rosati



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ACTIVISM

ENGAGEMENT, REFLECTION AND EXCHANGE

SENEGAL / FEMINIST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Institute was a wonderful experience - I found it very refreshing because it was a space for engagement, reflection, exchange and learning.

I particularly enjoyed the session on sexuality, which really challenged my way of thinking and made me reflect on the body in the context of feminism and women's rights not only as a site of struggle but also one of pleasure. Another session which I found very challenging and inspiring was the one on demystifying religious discourses and laws and the interpretation of religious texts. As someone who truly believes in secularism, I was always wary of working with religious texts. However, after this session I realized that (re)interpreting religious texts can be a powerful tool for feminists living in Muslim majority countries where religion plays a central role in shaping how the state addresses women's concerns and how people live. I greatly appreciated the fact that some of our trainers came from different schools of thought and specializations. Their diverse backgrounds enriched the sessions and facilitated discussions on a variety of different strategies to defend women's rights.

Over a rich, intensive two-week period, we also had a little bit of time to "play". I had the chance to visit the beautiful city of Dakar with its markets, its ocean and jazz bars. I also made friendships with very bright, inspiring feminists and activists from around the world.

It is through the opportunity to take part in training events such as The Feminist

Leadership Institute, that we are reminded that Feminism is a collective experience. It is our diverse backgrounds and opinions which enrich us as feminists and support our struggle for gender equality and social justice.

May El Sallab

May El Sallab is the program officer at the Women and Memory Forum, Cairo. She is a half French, half Egyptian women's rights activist, based in Cairo, Egypt.



NEWS

FROM NETWORKERS

DRESS CODES / BOOK LAUNCH

UK / WALKING A TIGHTROPE

Walking a Tightrope by Ayesha Salma Kariapper, published by WLUML

In December 2009, WLUML published the book *Walking a Tightrope: Women and Veiling in the United Kingdom* by Ayesha Salma Kariapper, WLUML networker and former ICO Deputy Coordinator. This publication is the result of research and analysis of various factors influencing women's adoption of clothing described as Muslim or Islamic, and it examines the ways in which debates over dress codes have shaped British Muslim women's strategies in dealing with the limitations often imposed on them in the name of religion, culture and identity within the community and also with exclusion and racism from mainstream society in the United Kingdom.

The launch of the publication took place on 10 December 2009 at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. At the launch, a panel of speakers were invited – Ayesha Salma Kariapper (the author), Fatou Sow (WLUML International Coordinator, and Professor of Sociology, Université Paris Denis Diderot) and Ziba Mir-Hosseini (WLUML Council Member, and Professor of Anthropology, SOAS). The book launch was well attended with a mixture of audience members, from WLUML networkers to students and members of the wider public. A reception was held after the launch and the full-size version of the WLUML Dress Codes and Modes exhibition was on display. The Dress Codes exhibition attracted a lot of visitors and received very positive feedback.



THE BURKHA DEBATE

The newsletter here publishes two articles which espouse opposing views on the debate surrounding the burqa in France. The first is that of Ahmed Zaki Osman and the latter is by Fatou Sow. Ahmed claims the right of women to wear the burqa in the name of their personal liberties; Fatou Sow refutes his argument in the name of the same liberties. You are all invited to participate in the debate!

Ahmed Zaki Osman:

From Sudan to France, recent controversies over the dress code of Muslim women represent the culmination of successive phases of heavy state interference in women's dress that has been trying to redefine the nature of personal liberties.

In highly politicized moves, different European and some Muslim majority countries have led the way in determining which forms of dress are legitimate and which deserve to be legally banned.

In July 2009, Sudan shocked the political scene, both internationally and domestically, by prosecuting a woman for wearing "indecent dress" in a public place. The act of wearing trousers was considered to be violation of some provisions of Obscene and Indecent Acts in the Sudanese Penal Code. The perpetrator, Lubna Ahmed Al Hussein, was sentenced to 40 lashes.

Sudan is not the only country that has been trying to consolidate the judicialisation of 'Islamic' garments for women. Six years after a controversial law that banned "ostentatious" religious symbols from classrooms in France, French President Nicolas Sarkozy clearly expressed his wish to outlaw the wearing of burqa (the full face cover) in public places, including public transport. Despite the fact that the full face veil is



a rare sight in France, a wide spectrum of the French public view the burqa as a threat to *laïcité* and link the burqa and the hijab in general with the repression of women's sexuality and liberty.

Since Sarkozy's launch of the anti-burqa campaign in June 2009, Muslim women were caught in the political limelight yet were not actively participating in a debate that specifically targeted them. In the parliamentary committee that deals with the anti-burqa debate, burqa wearers were represented as oppressed and weak. In their brief appearances before the committee, they were ridiculed when they described the burqa as a garment that was voluntarily worn to fulfill a religious duty.

The parliamentary committee issued a report concerning the debate on the 26 January 2010, recommending a partial ban of the burqa when using public services, but stopped short of calling for an outright ban after critics argued that such a move would be socially divisive and hard to enforce.

Three main categories of criticisms against the proposed law have recently emerged. Firstly, some argue that that taking any legal actions against the burqa would inflame Islamic fundamentalism in France, the home of the largest Muslim minority in Europe. Secondly, the proposed ban might be seen as a violation of women's right to choose the garment they wish to wear. Thirdly, that banning the burqa would isolate the women and force them to stay in their homes.

Furthermore, some analysts view the ban of the burqa in Europe as a representation of the failure of the various policies adopted by different western governments to assimilate and integrate Muslim minorities.

France is not the first European country to consider a burqa ban. The burqa storm quickly spilled over into the UK where UKIP became the first British party to propose such a broad ban of the burqa.

Nigel Farage, chief of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), shares the

same anxieties with the French political elite that consider the burqa as an alien cultural symbol, calling it a symbol of an "increasingly divided Britain". The British National Party (BNP) also proposed a similar ban, to be only enforceable in schools.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the debate over Muslim women's choice of attire is usually led by right wing European politicians pushing an anti-immigration agenda.

Fatou Sow:

I have lived in Paris for 12 years and have followed the debates on the veil with interest as a social sciences researcher, feminist, African and Muslim immigrant in France; hence my reaction to Ahmed Zaki Osman whom I thank for his excellent voluntary work at the international coordination office.

I should say straightaway that one cannot, in either case, establish a comparison between the prohibition of trousers for women in Sudan to that of the burqa in France. Sudan is an Islamic republic that controls women's dress and prohibits them from wearing trousers, all in the name of Muslim laws. This same desire to prohibit, in the name of religion and of morals, can be found in Nigeria, under the Indecent Dress Code Bill. It is completely erroneous to confuse this form of prohibition with the proposed ban of the burqa in public spaces in France. One cannot give the same status to trousers and the burqa. Fundamentally, the two items are not the same, materially or symbolically. In no circumstance is the burqa, even worn freely, a symbol or an instrument of freedom. Trousers have no religious or social symbolism; they are considered to be an item of clothing that is practical in some contexts, and elegant in others, and are commonly worn in a large number of Asian countries. Lubna Ahmad al-Hussein, and Sudanese women in general who have defied the law, are engaging in a struggle for several fundamental liberties that have been severely curbed for religious reasons. Their struggle takes the form of the

rejection of an 'Islamic' dress code as well as an ongoing campaign to reform rape laws that criminalise the female victim.

One should not, of course, confuse the headscarf worn by Muslim women and the burqa. This distinction is an important one in the current debate in France. In 2004, the French government banned the headscarf in primary and secondary schools, in the name of *laïcité* (≈secularism). While the debate was heated and provoked several questions related to the recognition of the status of Muslims in France, the law was passed and has not aroused further indignation or protests.

The burqa, like the headscarf ban, has certainly led to xenophobic and racist reactions from the extreme right, but the parliamentary commission of enquiry on the burqa was initiated by André Gérin, the communist deputy mayor of Vénissieux, a town near Lyon that has a strong Muslim community.

I share with Ahmed the hope that all legislation on the matter of how people dress will end, above all as such legislation concerns only women, whether that be in France, the rest of Europe, or in a number of Muslim-majority countries. But I am also committed to the preservation of women's freedoms. The wearing of the burqa has been compulsory in Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, as has the wearing of the chador or the headscarf elsewhere. This dress practice, which has come to be seen as a marker of Muslim identity, constitutes an imprisonment of women in their society. Behind these symbols of a Muslim identity is hidden a set of practices that effectively marginalise women in the public and private spheres. It is telling that these debates that come up at one time or another in various countries, only appear to take centre stage in communities where *laïcité* has been established as the principle of separation between religion and the state.



NEWS FROM NETWORKERS

INDONESIA / KNOWING OUR RIGHTS

A Seminar and Workshop on Power, Ownership and Equality

On 15 August 2009 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, SCN-CREST, Impulse, WEMC and WLUML jointly organized a public seminar on "Power, Ownership and Equality". The seminar was organized to discuss WLUML's recent publication *Knowing our Rights* which has been translated into Bahasa Indonesian. The purpose of the seminar was to open up a discussion on women's identity and the role that culture plays in legitimising women's unequal position in society, as well as to discuss ways in which cultures that are seen to discriminate against women can be reinterpreted.

Speakers at the conference included: Farha Ciciek sociologist and feminist theologian; M. Ikhsanuddin, religious leader and Headmistress at the Islamic boarding school 'Pondok Pesantren Krapyak Yogyakarta'; and Sri Wiyanti Eddyono, WEMC researcher and WLUML council member as well as commissioner in Komnas Perempuan from 2007 to 2009.

Both Farha Ciciek and M. Ikhsanuddin discussed the problem of how rigid interpretations of cultural and religious practices become obstacles to women's equality in society. Sri Wiyanti's presentation focused on how some parts of Indonesian State Marriage Law use religious interpretation that can be viewed as being unjust to women.

During the discussions particular focus was given to the traditional Islamic boarding school system in Indonesia. Participants and speakers also debated the women's movement's strategy for developing theoretical discourse into practical strategies that work to empower women's lives.

As a follow up to the *Knowing our Rights* seminar, a special women's workshop was organized over a three day period to allow deeper reflection on the theme of power and marriage.

The *Knowing our Rights* workshop sessions:

- 1) 'An Introduction to Power Relations' with Gutomo Prihatmo;
- 2) 'Ownership and Politics of Women's Bodies' with Budi Wahyuni;
- 3) 'Women and Marriage in the Context of State Laws' with Sri Wiyanti;
- 4) 'Women and Marriage in the Context of Islamic Law' with Ruhaini;
- 5) 'Women's Experiences in Public Areas' with Yustina W. Neni.

All the participants found the topics covered very interesting and stressed the importance of organizing a future workshop in order to continue the discussion of the themes covered in the *Knowing our Rights* manual.

BUREAU INTERNATIONAL FOR LAÏCITÉ

The Bureau International for Laïcité (BIL) was created on 9 December 2009, and launched a solemn call: The principle of 'laïcité' was therein dedicated afresh to "the strict separation of State and religion, guarantees of the non interference of religion in the sphere of state authority, and a real independence of civil society religious and faith based organisations vis-a-vis the state".

If this principle was present in the 'laïcité' law of 1905, the Bureau confirmed its engagement to defend the equality and the universality of rights. It introduced a new and contemporary idea: "to refuse the globalised predatory and destructive neoliberal policies which accentuate poverty and whose first victims are women and children". WLUML, as well as several members of the international solidarity network in their personal capacity, are associated with this initiative, convinced that 'laïcité' is one of the various strategies in the struggle against fundamentalism of every sort.

For more information, please refer to the BLI site:

<http://laicity.info/bli/>



IRAN / POST ELECTION

In the aftermath of the disputed 2009 presidential elections, women have reasserted themselves as strong political actors in Iran. Two WLUML networkers tell the story

Zara Saeidzadeh:

After the feigned presidential election of summer 2009, peaceful protesters from every class, gender and age were brutally arrested, tortured and killed by police, a group of security forces named Basij and the revolutionary guard. The wave of arrests targeted grassroots, students, journalists, human rights activists, members of civil society, political and social activists.

The most striking element after the election was Iranian women's political participation and their vast presence in social activities, mostly in all street rallies and demonstrations as a part of the "Green Movement". Zahra Rahnava's active presence before and after her husband Mir-Hosain Musavi's election campaign encouraged women and girls to become more involved in politics. As a result, women have been present in all events and demonstrations.

Since June 2009, women have shown courage and confidence in the face of massive state repression. Some have paid with their lives while some continue to languish in jail. Among them we remember: Neda Agha Sultan, a 27 year old philosophy student, was shot dead during a rally; Taraneh Musavi, who was kidnapped, raped and killed by unknown security forces and Hengameh Shahidi a journalist and PHD student at SOAS in London, who was arrested and kept in prison for 5

months before being sentenced to 6 years and three months in jail.

Rochelle Terman:

The wave of arrests that followed the post-election crackdown targeted members of peaceful civil society groups, including many women's rights defenders. Women activists were detained by authorities and/or were forced to leave the country out of fear of arrest, including Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh, Parvin Ardalan, Shireen Ebadi, Noushin Ebadi, Shadi Sadr, Hengameh Shahidi and Mansoureh Shojaee, amongst others. It is clear that the Iranian authorities intended to lock up or chase out women's rights defenders, so as to create a "brain drain", or "activist drain" that would paralyze the movement.

But even in hiding, Iranian women's rights defenders continue to participate in the "Green Movement". In many reform or civil rights movements in the past and in other countries, women's issues take a back seat to other concerns. But what we are seeing now is a paradigm shift in the politics of gender and sexuality in Iran, one that places women's issues front and center in the call for reform.

Take, for instance, the solidarity demonstrated by a mass of Iranian men for detained student leader Majid Tavakoli. Following his arrest on 8 December 2009, government-run news agencies published photographs of Tavakoli wearing a headscarf and chador – the ubiquitous Iranian women's uniform – as he reportedly tried to escape. The connotation of the photographs was that Tavakoli was so weak and shameful that he denounced his manhood in order to escape punishment. But the government

attempt to humiliate a hero of the student movement undoubtedly backfired when men both inside and outside Iran responded by posting pictures of themselves wearing hijab (headscarves) on Facebook, often with the caption, "We are all Majid." This unforeseen act of mass solidarity shocked many.

SHADI SADR WINS 2009 HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS TULIP AWARD

WLUML is delighted to announce that Ms. Shadi Sadr was the recipient of the 2009 Tulip Award, the Dutch Human Rights Defenders Award. The granting of this award recognised the invaluable activism of Ms. Sadr and reconfirmed her courageous and tireless defence of human rights and campaign for women's rights in Iran. WLUML nominated Ms. Sadr in the hope that this award would grant her personal safety and further support in her campaigns.

"It is important not only for me, but also for the battle going on in Iran for three decades: the battle for freedom and for democracy"
Shadi Sadr



REVIEWS

FILM

WOMEN, WAR AND WELFARE IN JERUSALEM

Directed by Sahera Dirbas
2009

The DVD contains two short films on women's empowerment in times of conflict, and this review will focus on the first: *The Story of Hind al-Husseini*. Hind al-Husseini established the Dar Al Tifl Al Arabi Institute (or orphanage) in Jerusalem in 1948. An English-educated, former teacher in the Islamic school in the Old City, Husseini's childhood and young adulthood is introduced by the narrator through a series of black and white photographs. It is her adopted daughter who explains the meaning of one image in particular: the young Husseini has climbed aboard a train, and facing a crowd made up entirely of men, she is making a speech exhorting them to discuss the Palestinian problem on their arrival in England. It was taken in the late 1930s during the Palestinian General strike and the revolt against Jewish immigration to Palestine and the Zionist project. In 1945 Husseini left teaching to become a social worker and together with other Palestinian women's groups she formed the Jerusalem women's solidarity society and travelled through the cities and villages of Palestine to create kindergartens, dressmaking and charitable women's groups, establishing 22 branches in total.

After the UN vote on the partition of Palestine in 1947, fighting broke out between Jewish and Arab militia and by 1949, 750,000 Palestinians had been expelled from their land; members of the women's society were also expelled and hundreds of refugees arrived in Jerusalem including the survivors of the April 9, 1948 Deir Yassin massacre by the Irgun and the Stern Gang. (The former village is now the site of the Kfar Shaul mental health centre, a cruel irony that is exploited to good

effect in Israeli director, Udi Aloni's film, *Forgiveness*.) On her way to a meeting to address the consequences of this deadly attack, Husseini came across 55 distraught children between the ages of 1 and 12 years old sitting in the streets of the city and when she asked them who they were they explained they were from Deir Yassin. Husseini gave them all shelter and a home with her; supported by the mayor Anwar Khatib, she started a school in her house, initially just teaching one kindergarten class.

During the 1967 war, Husseini used the school as a hospital for the wounded, although the school building itself was bombed and half of it destroyed, and the Norwegian government contributed to its reconstruction after the war. Before the first Intifada the orphanage housed 350 children, but thereafter many children were unable to return after visiting relatives in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the situation has only become worse with the erection of the 'huge, ugly' Separation Wall. From 350 children only 33 are left. Hind al-Husseini died in 1994. Her adopted daughter, and now director of the Institute, concludes the short film with these words: "You have to explain to the children... they don't understand why it's so difficult, no one could separate a family from a child, no one, only this Wall".

Eleanor Kilroy



BOOK

WOMEN AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Edited by Nadjie Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt (Zed Books, 2009)

Nadjie Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt's second collaboration sees new applications of their conjoined perspective: a hybrid of Anthropology, Political Science and Gender Studies. Their first co-authored publication: 'What Kind of Liberation? – Women and the Occupation of Iraq' (2009), explicated, in meticulous detail, the effects of the US/UK-led military occupation on women's lives: from constricted agency in the political sphere, to restricted access to healthcare, education, and a living wage. *Women and War in the Middle East* examines the loci where transnationalism and gender converge on the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and in Iraq. From this starting point, conclusions applicable to other cases of feminist struggle emerge. Yet the collection raises questions for everyone, as it interrogates the legitimacy of NGOs, donors' pre-requisites, academic scholarship and feminist activism: "[W]e have to move beyond a simple 'add women and stir' approach [...] to include power relationships and structures as well as shifting notions of femininity and masculinity", the authors write in their introduction.

Chapters include: Sophie Richter Devroe's assiduous analysis of the co-optation and fracturing of Palestinian women's activism by donor's gender agendas, and by those unable to recognise the essential role of the nationalist struggle in Palestinian life; Riina Isotalo's erudite and informative breakdown of questions pertaining to Palestinian women's citizenship; and Shahrzad Mojab's assessment of NGOisation of the Kurdish women's movement, in which she traces NGO funding to an anti-feminist donor organisation, intent on depoliticising the

movement, and adopting it as a tool to bolster economic neo-liberalisation.

The book is a call for deeper exchanges between specialists in gender, on the one hand, and the traditionally male-dominated practices and discourses of 'high politics' including International Relations, and Global Political Economy, on the other. It exposes a need for the further study of masculinities. With examinations of the suppression of male vulnerability and the normalisation of dehumanisation which sustains structural and literal violence, the trajectories of foreign policy, global economic fluctuations and their gendered implications may be clarified.

Aisha Dennis

FILM

FOUR WIVES, ONE MAN

**Directed by Nahid Persson
2009**

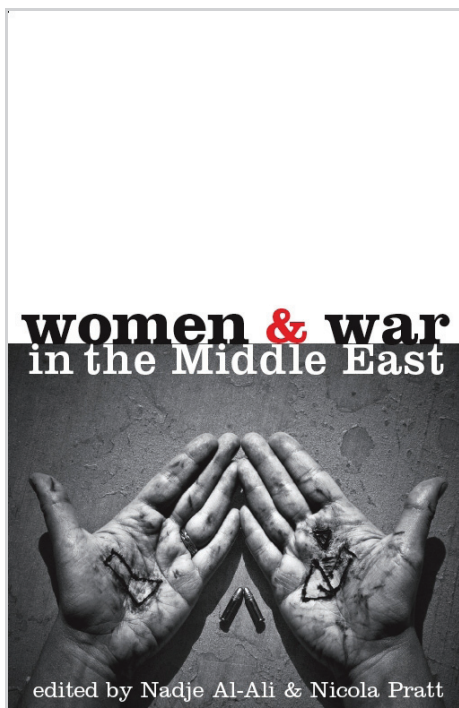
Four Wives, One Man, follows the lives of four women in rural Iran: Ferang, Goli, Shahpar and Ziba - all of whom are married to the same man, with 20 children between them. The documentary gives a compelling account of their experiences of abuse, discontent and rivalry, as well as love and friendship. In doing so, it highlights the psychological and emotional problems they face as individuals in the context of polygynous relationships.

The film skilfully demonstrates the vicious cycle of jealousy in this family, which begins with arrival of the fourth wife and the response of two of the three wives that "it was better when we were only three". The extent of their feelings of jealousy can be seen when Ziba reveals that the third wife threatened her husband that she

would stone the new wife if he remarried. This resentment of the new wife has its echo at the end of the film when Ziba threatens to poison her husband and the potential fifth wife, the prospect of which unites the four wives with their agreement that "a fifth wife would ruin things". While the comments of the husband's mother provide some comic relief, the film offers serious insights into these women's grievances, in particularly their sense of having absolutely no control over their lives, due to two reasons in particular. Firstly, they feel they cannot divorce their husband because of the stigma attached to divorced, elderly women and, secondly, by staying with him they are forced to do his will.

Nahid Persson has created a thought-provoking documentary by not only addressing the issue of polygamy, but also the effects of patriarchal systems upon women.

Khadiza Shahid



EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME TO THE NEW WLUML WEBSITE

Visit the updated WLUML website at
www.wluml.org

You will find material on everything from how to outsmart internet censorship to a translation of the 2004 Moroccan family law, and a free downloadable chapter from Rana Husseini's book, *Murder in the Name of Honour*.

For an innovative multi-media platform for film documentary and audio interviews with and about women's rights activism, have a look at Our Voices. This section showcases the achievements of, for example, women working within their communities to improve the lives of the girl-child and challenging negative and reductive stereotypes about 'Muslim Women'.

If you would like to share your short films and audio and other resources in English, French and Arabic, with the thousands of women globally who are facing similar forms of discrimination in the name of religion, culture or tradition, email us at:

wluml@wluml.org

WEBSITE NOW IN FARSI / DARI

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is delighted to announce the addition of a Farsi/Dari section to its upgraded website. Particular thanks to active WLUML networker and Council member, Shadi Sadr, who has worked hard to launch this 'sister' site in time for the ninth edition of the WLUML newsletter.

The link from the main WLUML page will be in the language bar, alongside Arabic.

www.wluml.org



violence is not our culture
the global campaign to stop killing and stoning women

The Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women
cordially invites you to

***A panel discussion on violence against women and girls
excused in the name of 'culture'***

**3rd of March 2010
18:00 to 19:30**

**10th Floor UN Church Center
777 United Nations Plaza
Manhattan, New York, NY 10017, USA**

Event details

- An introduction to the Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women**
- "Culture" as an excuse for violence against women and girls, and how women respond:** Experiences from the Sudan, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria and Afghanistan
- Invoking Human Rights and State Accountability - Prospects and Challenges**
 - Rashida Manjoo** UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women
 - Manfred Nowak** UN Special Rapporteur on Torture

WLUML

We would be happy to receive your comments, suggestions or feedback.
Please write to pubs@wluml.org

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WLUML is an international solidarity network that provides information, solidarity and support for all women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam.

DISCLAIMER: The analysis and views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of any offices of the Women Living Under Muslim Laws – International Solidarity Network (WLUML) and the responsibility for all opinions, views and accuracy of information contained in this publication rests entirely with individual contributors.