

## **NETWORK STATEMENT: WLML**

### **WOMEN LIVING UNDER MUSLIM LAWS**

International solidarity network  
Reseau international de solidarite  
**Central Coordination:** Boite Postale 20023  
34791 Grabels Cedex, France.

**Coordination for Asia:** 68 – Tipu Block,  
New Garden Town, Lahore, Pakistan

**Coordination for Africa:** P.O. Box 73630,  
Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria

**Women Living Under Muslim Laws** is a network of women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws, both written and unwritten, drawn from interpretations of the Koran tied up with local traditions.

**Women Living Under Muslim Laws** addresses itself to women living where Islam is the religion of the State, as well as to women who belong to Muslim communities ruled by minority religious laws, to women in secular states where Islam is rapidly expanding and where fundamentalists demand a minority religious law, as well as to women from immigrant Muslim communities in Europe and the Americas, and to non Muslim women, either nationals or foreigners, living in Muslim countries and communities, where Muslim laws are applied to them and to their children.

#### **Women Living Under Muslim Laws**

was formed in response to situations which required urgent action, during the years 1984-85. The case of the three feminists arrested and jailed without trial, kept incommunicado for seven months, in Algeria, for having discussed with other women the project of law known as 'Family Code', which was highly unfavorable to women. The case of an Indian Sunni woman who filled a petition in the Supreme Court arguing that the Muslim minority law applied to her in her divorce denied her the rights otherwise guaranteed by the Constitution of India to all citizens, and called for support. The case of a woman in Abu Dhabi, charged with adultery and sentenced to be stoned to death after delivering and feeding her child for two months. The case of the 'Mothers of Algiers' who fought for custody of their children after divorce.

The campaigns that have been launched on these occasions received full support both from women within Muslim countries and communities, and from progressive and feminists groups abroad.

Taking the opportunity of meeting at the international feminist gathering 'Tribunal on Reproductive Rights' held in Amsterdam, Holland, in July 1984, nine women from

Muslim countries and communities: Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, came together and formed the Action Committee of Women Living Under Muslim Laws, in support of women's struggles in the concerned contexts. This committee later evolved into the present network.

The objectives of **Women Living Under Muslim Laws** are

- \*to create links amongst women and women's groups (including those prevented from organising or facing repression if they attempt to do so) within the Muslim countries and communities.

- \*to increase women's knowledge about both their common and diverse situations in various contexts,

- \*to strengthen their struggles and to create the means to support them internationally from within the Muslim world and outside.

In each of these countries till now women have been waging their struggle in isolation.

**Women Living Under Muslim Laws** aims at

- \*providing information for women and women's groups from Muslim countries and communities

- \*disseminating this information to other women from Muslim countries and communities

- \*supporting their struggles from within the Muslim countries and communities, and make them known outside

- \*providing a channel of communication amongst women from Muslim countries and communities

These objectives are fulfilled through

- \*building a network of information and solidarity

- \*disseminating information through 'Dossiers'

- \*facilitating interaction and contact between women from Muslim countries and communities, and between them and progressive and feminists groups at large

- \*facilitating exchanges of women from one geographical area to another in the Muslim world.

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Homa Hoodfar and Nelofer Pazira

Building Civil Societies: A Guide for Social and Political Activism

Homa Hoodfar and Nelofer Pazira

Building civil society rests upon public participation on the way society is currently being run, on values being promoted, and on how resources are currently being distributed. However, Governments, politicians, and elites often create the false impression that only they are qualified for political and social participation, and that ordinary people have little to contribute beside electing them to the office. Such attitudes have silenced many voices from expressing their concerns. This book by providing actual cases and examples of action that ordinary people of diverse social and political contexts have taken in order to promote justice, democracy and human rights in their communities does much to demystify the meaning of social and political participation. It demonstrates that such participation does not need to be initiated formally, or at official levels by high-ranking individuals, nor justified with cumbersome words. Furthermore it provides a basic guide on forms of participation for those interested in bringing about a better society and for those who refuse to accept injustice against themselves and others even when legitimized under the banner of culture and tradition. This book shows that in our interconnected world we do not have to stand in despair as international events unfold. We can, through local actions, take part in building a better world of communities.

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