

### 1. Louisa Ait-Hamou (Algeria)

Louisa Ait-Hamou is a university lecturer based in Algiers, teaching African literature. Louisa has been involved in women's organisations for the past twenty-five years. She is one of the founding members of a grassroots NGO called "SOS Femmes en Détresse" (SOS Women in Distress) that takes care of homeless and abused women. Her main area of interest is the issue of violence against women. Louisa is presently working as a volunteer in a network called 'Réseau Wassila' which takes care of women and children victims of violence.

### 2. Nadjé Al-Ali (Iraq/Germany/UK)

Nadjé Al-Ali is a lecturer in social anthropology at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. She has carried out research on women and gender in the Middle East as well as Muslim migrants and refugees in Europe, and has authored, amongst other publications, *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East* (2000, Cambridge University Press). Nadjé was involved in the Egyptian women's movement and is now a member of Women in Black London (WIB), Women against Fundamentalisms (WAF), and Act Together: Women's Action on Iraq.

### 3. Zainah Anwar (Malaysia)

Zainah Anwar is the Executive Director of Sisters in Islam (SIS), a non-governmental organisation working on the rights of Muslim women within the framework of Islam. She is also a member of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia. She has been key to the high public profile of Sisters in Islam. She is its main spokesperson, and gives public talks on Islam and women's rights, politics, and fundamental liberties.

Her other work experience includes: Chief Programme Officer, Political Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, London; freelance writer; Senior Analyst, Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Kuala Lumpur; political and diplomatic writer, *The New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur. Her book, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among the Students* has become a standard reference in the study of Islam in Malaysia. She was educated at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Boston University and the MARA Institute of Technology, Malaysia, in the fields of international relations and journalism.

### 4. Gabeba Baderoon (South Africa)

Gabeba Baderoon is completing her PhD on images of Islam in South African media at the University of Cape Town, with the title 'Ambiguous Visibility: Representations of Islam in South African Media and Culture'. She holds the John Sainsbury/Linbury Trust Fellowship. Gabeba writes on Orientalism and the media, on art, and is also a poet.

### 5. Amie Bojang Sissoho (The Gambia)

Amie Bojang Sissoho is a long-standing broadcaster, writer and editor of radio programmes in the Gambia. She has used radio as a tool for her activism, broadcasting on Radio Gambia-GRTS (her employers). She has used other privately-owned radio stations in the Gambia, Radio 102.1 FM Stereo, Citizen FM 105.7 The Voice of the People and FMB, a

community radio station. Amie has focused her work on women's empowerment issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), in collaboration with Gamcotrap, an NGO committed to the eradication of harmful traditional practices against women, of which Amie is a member.

### **6. Anisa de Jong (The Netherlands/UK)**

Anisa de Jong is an activist within the Safra Project, a UK-based resource project working on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual and transgender women who identify themselves as Muslim culturally and/or religiously. Anisa is experienced in human rights research and activism, with a particular focus on women, sexual orientation and asylum issues.

### **7. Elfriede Harth (Colombia/France)**

Elfriede Harth is the European Representative of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), an NGO with special consultative status within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN). CFFC shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well being, and respect and affirm the moral capacity of women and men to make sound decisions about their lives. Elfriede was born in Colombia to a Colombian mother and a German father. She spent the first part of her life in Colombia before moving to Germany for secondary education and then eventually to France, where she lives today. Elfriede is a leader in the Roman Catholic Church reform movement. She is a member of the steering committee of the International Movement 'We Are Church'. She holds a Diploma from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris and a postgraduate degree in sociology from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

### **8. Sara Hossain (Bangladesh)**

Sara Hossain is a lawyer and has been practising in Dhaka as an advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh since 1991. She has been involved in *pro bono* casework and research on human rights issues (forced evictions, censorship, prisoners' rights, minority rights) through *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK, the Law and Mediation Centre), a Dhaka-based human rights organisation, of which she is a member. She has also worked closely with several Asian regional human rights and women's rights networks. She earlier served (1997-2003) as a Legal Officer at INTERIGHTS (the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights) in London, where she set up the South Asia programme, and was involved in providing advice on international and comparative human rights to lawyers and judges across the region in connection with cases before national and international courts, and also for coordinating a project on 'honour crimes', including advocacy and research on the 'right to marry'. Sara has written and spoken widely on women's rights, including on forced marriage. Her interest lies in women's human rights, personal law reforms, public interest litigation and access to justice.

### **9. Ayesha Imam (Nigeria)**

Dr. Ayesha Imam is the founding executive director of BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights in Nigeria. BAOBAB has been involved since 1993 in the WLUML Women and Law Programme Nigeria project and was formally established in 1996 as an organisation

focusing on women's human rights under customary, secular and religious laws in Nigeria. BAOBAB is also the regional coordination office of WLUMML for Africa and the Middle East. Ayesha Imam has been a lecturer and researcher in women's studies, research and gender analysis at universities and research institutes in Nigeria, UK, Canada and Senegal. She is on the board of several feminist organisations, and, together with BAOBAB, is the recipient of the John Humphrey Human Rights Award for 2002.

#### **10. Harsh Kapoor (India/France)**

Harsh Kapoor is an Indian national based in France and has been associated with WLUMML since 1985-86. Harsh is a sociologist, also the founder of various listservs: South Asia Citizens web, South Asians Against Nukes and Indian Pakistan Arms Race and Militarisation Watch. Harsh is interested in the study of communalist and right wing movements in South Asia and their links elsewhere. He is also interested in the social implications of new technologies.

#### **11. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi (Nigeria)**

Sanusi's academic background is in economics and Islamic Law. He has strong interests in the study of Muslim politics and political theory, and many of his writings have been attempts at delinking Muslim law and the historical milieu in which it evolved - Sanusi stresses the need for reinterpreting law in modernity. Many of his papers can be found on [www.gamji.com/sanusi.htm](http://www.gamji.com/sanusi.htm). He was a university lecturer before joining the banking industry. Sanusi Lamido is now the head of Risk Management in UBA, the third largest bank in Nigeria.

#### **12. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (Iran/UK)**

Ziba Mir-Hosseini is an independent consultant, researcher and writer on Middle Eastern issues, specializing in gender, family relations, Islam, law and development. She is a Research Associate at the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies, SOAS, University of London, and currently Hauser Global Law Visiting Professor at the School of Law, New York University. She is the author of *Marriage on Trial: A Study of Islamic Family Law in Iran and Morocco* (I. B. Tauris, 1993) and *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (Princeton University Press 1999 & I. B. Tauris 2000). Ziba is a co-director of two feature-length documentaries: *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998), and *Runaway* (2001).

#### **13. Nora Murat (Malaysia)**

Nora Murat is a legal officer for Sisters In Islam (SIS) in Malaysia. Nora was a practicing lawyer and holds LLb and Diploma in Syariah and Legal Practice. She is responsible for SIS legal services and coordinates a weekly legal column in a leading newspaper in Malaysia.

#### **14. Tazeen M. Murshid (Netherlands/Belgium/Bangladesh)**

Dr. Tazeen M. Murshid is a Professor teaching on issues of Islam in world politics, and human rights and governance, for the Masters of International Politics at the Free University of Brussels (ULB). She taught South Asian studies at universities in London and Oxford for several years. She was a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin in 1999-2000 and a Visiting Professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes des Sciences Sociales in Paris in 2003, researching and lecturing on gender and law in colonial India. She obtained her D. Phil.

degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford (St Anthony's College), where she was awarded the Frère Exhibition for Indian Studies. Her research interests include Islam and secularism; gender issues such as female autonomy and gender violence in relation to family; and criminal law in relation to the role of the state and civil society activism; ethnicity; and migration; as well as contemporary political and educational concerns in Asia and Europe. Tazeen is currently writing on the social construction of *shari'a*, and on law, crime and morality in colonial India. She is the author of *The Sacred and the Secular: Bengal Muslim Discourses, 1871-1977* (Oxford University Press: Calcutta, 1995 and UPL: Dhaka, 1996).

#### **15. Niloufar Pourzand (Iran/Afghanistan/Canada)**

Niloufar Pourzand has completed her PhD thesis at the University of Greenwich with Professor Nira Yuval-Davis. Her PhD focuses on 'Identity, Gender and Education Amongst Educated Afghan Refugee Women in Pakistan'. Niloufar is a member of the Women in Conflict Zones Network and, at the time of the Conference, was a visiting pre-doctoral scholar at the Center for Refugee Studies at the University of York, Toronto. Niloufar has worked with the UN for many years, mostly on human rights issues, and is currently based in Tajikistan.

#### **16. Gita Sahgal (India/UK)**

Gita Sahgal is a filmmaker and writer. She is a founding member of Women Against Fundamentalisms (WAF), a UK based organisation which was established in 1989. She is co-editor (with Nira Yuval-Davis) of *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*. Gita has written on fundamentalisms, secularism, and multiculturalism as social policy.

She has also made a number of films on gender issues: on *sati* (the Hindu practice of widows burning with the corpse of their husband at cremation); dowry murders; women who kill their husbands because of domestic violence; and on war crimes in Bangladesh. Her latest films are *Love Snatched: forced marriage and multiculturalism* and *Tying the Knot*.

#### **17. Chayanika Shah (India)**

Chayanika Shah is a feminist activist and has worked and written extensively on issues of the politics of population control and reproductive technologies, feminist studies of science, and sexuality and sexual rights. She has been an active member of Forum Against Oppression of Women, a voluntary, non-funded, autonomous women's collective in Bombay, for more than twenty years. Over the years, Forum has actively worked on issues of legal reform, violence against women, communalism and rights of minorities, and was part of organising the International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat after the carnage in March 2002. Chayanika Shah has a doctorate in physics and teaches graduate students at a college affiliated to the University of Mumbai.

### 18. Michaela R. Told (Switzerland)

Michaela R. Told is a freelance consultant and activist fighting against racism and for human rights of women. She has been actively involved in lobbying on these issues at different International UN Conferences. She holds a Master's Degree in Commerce of the University of Economics and Business Administration in Vienna, Austria and in Women & Development from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands. Currently, she is working on her PhD dissertation with Prof. Nira Yuval-Davis at the University of East London, UK.

### 19. Nahda Younis Shehada (Palestine)

Nahda Younis Shehada is a PhD student affiliated with the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands. Her research focuses on exploring the various issues related to the process of Islamic family law reform and specifically the gap between Palestinian women's discourse and the concrete experience of the 'common' woman in the religious courts. Her MA paper was derived from her experience as a chairperson for the Model Parliament for women and legislation in the years 1997-98. Nahda's involvement with Palestinian political life dates back to the early 1980s, when she joined the Palestinian struggle for independence and self-determination. Since she returned to Gaza in 1994, Nahda has been working with various Palestinian women's organisations such as WCLAC (Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling), WATC (the Women's Technical Committee), *Mashriqiyat*, etc.

### 20. Nira Yuval-Davis (Israel/UK)

Dr. Nira Yuval-Davis, an Israeli diasporic Jew living in London, is a Professor and post-graduate Course Director in Gender, Sexualities and Ethnic Studies at the University of East London. Nira is one of the founders of Women Against Fundamentalisms (WAF) and Women In Black (WIB) in London, and the current President of the Research Committee on Ethnic, Race and Minority Relations of the International Sociological Association. Her publications include, among others, the book *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*, co-edited with Gita Sahgal, recently reprinted by WLUMML, and *Gender and Nation*, Sage 1997.

### 21. Stasa Zajovic (Yugoslavia)

Stasa Zajovic holds a degree in Romanic Languages from the University of Belgrade, and was employed as a professor and translator, being fluent in Spanish, Italian and English. Stasa founded Women in Black Belgrade in 1991 and is active in the Network of Women's Solidarity Against War. Stasa has been involved in organising feminist and peace workshops, staging anti-war demonstrations, campaigning for conscientious objection, running social programmes in refugee collective centres and contributing to various publications on the aforementioned issues.