

WLUML

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Annual Report

2023



WLUML Annual Report 2023

Designed, written, and compiled by Maira Asif with contributions from the WLUML board and networkers.

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“We must disrupt the apathy that has settled over the international community’s response to the most egregious remaining form of identity-based discrimination in the world today. It is our collective responsibility to show our commitment to our common humanity and values, and we can begin to do so through UN recognition of gender apartheid as an international crime against humanity.”

Dr. Homa Hoodfar

WLUML Board Member



Reflection on 2023: a Tumultuous Year

Dear friends,

2023 has been a year of many challenges and regression of rights across many fronts. As feminists and peace advocates from all corners of the world, and especially from Muslim contexts, we are reeling from the continued conflict in the Middle East, including the brutality of the genocidal war against Palestinians and the increasing violence against other displaced people reverberating across regions.

In Sudan, more than 8 million people have been forcibly displaced internally and some are seeking safety in neighboring countries. There are increased reports of gender-based violence and reports of mass sexual violence against women displaced by the brutal civil war. Given the social repercussions for women subjected to this form of violence, it is important to remember that these incidents are likely to be much more frequent than reported. The attack by Hamas fighters against Israeli communities on 7th October was characterized by abhorrent sexual violence and the mutilation of women's bodies. At the same time, Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli prisons reported naked beatings and threats of sexual assault upon noncompliance. Gender-based violence as a weapon of war and a tool of patriarchal control must be universally condemned.

An estimated 2 million undocumented refugees from Afghanistan including many women human rights defenders and civil society activists in Pakistan are being brutally pushed back into their country, where it is unsafe to be a woman. Their situation is not any better in Iran and India where they also face the daily threat of deportation. For women in Afghanistan, the Taliban have effectively crushed their social, economic, and physical freedoms, alongside the hopes and dreams of many women and girls. Yet not only international community has not taken any substantive step, but unfortunately transnational women's movement too has failed to take decisive global action to demonstrate their support for women's human rights in Afghanistan and push the society and states to take steps to stop the Taliban.

Just over one year after the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini, the 22-year-old Iranian-Kurdish woman, a 16-year-old Iranian teenager, Armita Geravand, also died after entering a coma. Despite the yearlong and nationwide protests in support of 'Woman, Life, Freedom,' Armita was not spared the same fate as Mahsa at the hands of government authorities for contravening the oppressive hijab laws. The policing of women's bodies, with new and much more stringent laws and with thousands of paid hijab police, continues unimpeded with incarcerations and deadly results.

While there is hope that the 7-year imposed war on Yemen might come to an end, it has left the country in utter devastation in its wake. This has stark consequences for women and girls and the 4.5 million people displaced, with more than a quarter of them female-headed households with little resources.

Reflection on 2023: a Tumultuous Year

But, it is always the darkest before dawn and we work to make our world a kinder and more humane where people and nature can live in harmony and peace.

Civil society within and outside Iran is preparing for a better future. WLUML is hosting the Feminist Collective to translate and examine the motto of 'Women, Life, Freedom' into specific demands and a vision for future Iran. After several consultations and strong debates online and in person, they have presented the Iranian Women's Bill of Rights as a Living Document. Find the latest version of the Bill in Farsi and English here: www.IWBR.org

WLUML board members devoted much time from 2019 to 2023 to recruit and organize several webinars, conferences, and workshops on constitutionalizing women's rights in Muslim contexts initially focusing on the situation of women in Afghanistan during the ill-fated peace talk with the Taliban. The scholars and the practitioners gathered presented the complexities of the history, and current opportunities and pitfalls, of ensuring gender equality in national constitutions. The total seven contributions were extensively workshopped and edited on several occasions, with the final products published in the Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice as a special issue so that it can reach wider audiences working on these topics.

WLUML, in collaboration with scholars and practitioners across the region, is working further on the constitutionalization of women's rights in Muslim contexts. We have been solidifying our networks across the region throughout the past years, and this year joined forces with our Turkish sisters of the Women's Equality Platform (ESIK) to host a major webinar featuring advocates of women's rights from Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan, on the "Backlash against women's rights and our strategies." Two WLUML board members traveled to Istanbul in September 2023 to meet with our Iranian, Kurdish, Turkish, and Afghan networkers, and exchange experiences and knowledge on how to best combat the revived backlash against women's rights and advocacy. Our webinars, gatherings, and exchanges emphasized the significance of enhanced feminist solidarity networks and collaboration at such times.

We have also had a strong presence in conventional media and published many articles on the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran., who are living under gender apartheid regimes to various degrees. We joined forces with other organizations and participated in webinar demonstrations. We held consultation meetings with women from Afghanistan and Iran as well as organizations that are working to improve the situation of women and children, particularly around humanitarian and women's education, including the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation.

This year, our Network has focused on campaigning for the international community and the United Nations to legally recognize gender apartheid and condemn the systematic segregation and exclusion of women from public life and public spaces in Afghanistan by the Taliban. We have lobbied the Canadian and German governments to support the call for the UN recognition of gender apartheid as a crime against humanity.

Reflection on 2023: a Tumultuous Year

88 women rights and human rights organizations have signed our [petition](#) and more than a hundred influential women journalists, intellectuals, and human rights activists have signed it. Karima Bennoune, the highly respected and recognized expert on international law and gender apartheid, was invited to give a lecture on the importance of mobilizing and demanding that the UN and the international community acknowledge this systematic crime against women. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Shirin Ebadi was invited to give the keynote talk at our hybrid event held jointly with Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan on UN Peace Day on 21 September in Toronto. Read and sign the petition for the legal recognition of gender apartheid [here](#). See our statements of solidarity [here](#).

For this Year's 16 Days of Activism, WLUMML council member Pasqualina Eckerström curated the virtual concert 'Songs of Protest'. She interviewed three courageous Iranian women musicians, and they in turn shared their messages to the Iranian people and their talents with the world. Despite the Iranian regime's efforts to silence female voices by banning female lead singers, these women continue to use their voices as an expression of self-identity and resistance. See the full concert on WLUMML's [social media](#).

Despite the setbacks and increased violence, we have witnessed global solidarity grow. Ordinary people across the world are protesting against state-sanctioned violence. We have felt the solidarity between feminists, peace activists, and minority advocates strengthening. Citizen journalism and personal perspectives and analysis are breaking dominant narratives and preventing the silencing of alternative voices. We know that we have always been our best resource. For this reason, we encourage networkers to hold each other close in our hearts and minds as we continue to work towards the realization of gender justice and peace.

In peace and sisterhood,

Homa Hoodfar



Women Living Under Muslim Laws ([WLUML](#)) is a transnational women's rights and feminist network. We promote gender justice and equality for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws or customs said to derive from Islam, whether they identify as Muslim, are members of another religion, or are secular or non-believers. Our transnational network provides information, solidarity, and support for women acting in their local contexts to advance gender equality. In doing so, WLUML acts as a solidarity network, a feminist think tank, and a knowledge and information force for local feminist struggles.

For 39 years, WLUML has connected individual women and feminist organizations from Indonesia to Turkey, Kenya to Afghanistan, Egypt to Germany, and more. WLUML holds a unique position as a transnational movement and has maintained an acute awareness of the unique political contexts that surround women of Muslim heritage. Our current website can be accessed [here](#) while our previous archived website can be accessed [here](#).

Mission and Vision

WLUML supports feminist local struggles for individual and collective autonomy within Muslim countries and communities by facilitating a transnational solidarity network. WLUML gathers, builds, and mobilizes knowledge, and furthers channels of communication and exchange towards the eradication of violence against women and the realization of gender justice, equality, and human rights, adopting an intersectional approach.

Our History

WLUML was [formed](#) in 1984 in response to the adoption of laws denying women's rights. It was in response to three urgent cases, across different countries and communities, where women were being denied rights by reference to laws justified under patriarchal or authoritarian interpretations of Islam. Nine women from Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan came together to take urgent action. They realized the necessity to share their struggles and to connect transnationally. Today, WLUML is still led by women of Muslim heritage and those with connections to these communities. The history and development of WLUML are closely linked to struggles to establish women's rights as human rights (an understanding that was lacking even within the UN and other custodians of human rights) and attempts to mobilize international support for the just treatment of individuals, particularly women, by governments, non-state actors or other political groups. For a longer history, please see our [Annual Report 2019-2020](#).

WLUML's History and Mission Readings

WLUML "Heart and Soul" by
Marieme H  lie-Lucas
1997

Controlled or
Autonomous: Identity
and the Experience of
the Network WLUML
by Farida Shaheed, 1994

Building Civil Societies:
A Guide for Social and
Political Action by
Homa Hoodfar &
Nelofar Pazira, 2000





How We Work Towards Our Mission

(i) By breaking the isolation of women struggling for gender equality through the facilitation of transnational solidarity – furthering communication, linkages, and the sharing of experiences between women in Muslim contexts, and with global feminist groups;

(ii) By building knowledge and sharing information – producing independent research that helps demystify the diverse sources of control over women's lives and minds, and the strategies and experiences of challenging these means of control.

How We Work

– Collective Projects –

Collective projects are topic-specific initiatives arising from networkers' and sister organizations' shared needs and interests. Networking groups and individuals participate in the programs' coordination and implementation according to their needs, expertise, and capacity. Collective projects often include training sessions, workshops, research for advocacy, and meetings and exchanges around specialized topics. Our current collective projects concern constitutionalizing women's rights, stop gender apartheid in Afghanistan, and women reclaiming public spaces with a focus this year on the right to mobility and riding safely and free of harassment.

– Networking & Information Services –

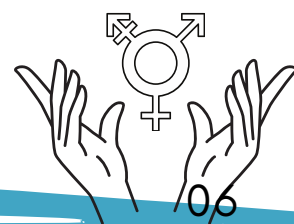
WLUMML directly connects women and feminist groups to facilitate a non-hierarchical exchange of information, expertise, strategies, and experience. We document trends, generate new analyses, and support networker's participation in international events. In 2023, we focused on strengthening regional solidarities with our Turkish, Iranian, and Afghan feminist peers, apart from our larger global coalition-building work.

– Capacity Building –

WLUMML is consciously engaged in building the capacity of network groups and individuals. Our internships are designed to engage young networkers in the fields of research and advocacy. We also facilitate exchanges, and training sessions, and organize the Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute for training young feminists from Muslim contexts in gender advocacy.

– Publications –

WLUMML as a feminist think tank collects, analyses, and circulates information regarding women's diverse experiences and strategies used to further gender equality and justice. Our publications are mainly in English with translations to other languages, including French and Arabic, where possible. Locally generated information is published in those respective languages.





Since our inception in 1984, WLUML's programs and research have been designed to reflect the expressed needs of our diverse networkers. WLUML programs have been supported by funding from generous donors but we also rely heavily on our networkers' given time, skills, and material contributions. In 2017 ([Plan of Action, Montreal 2017](#)), following years of intense discussion on the NGOisation of the women's movement and the imprisonment of Homa Hoodfar in Iran on the charges of dabbling in feminism and being an agent of the CIA and MI6, the WLUML International Council decided to, for five years, operate without external funding except for academic funds raised by members of the board and council for research topics relevant to our programs. This followed the completion of a very successful funded program, [Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation \(WELDD\)](#), and the release of Homa Hoodfar from Iranian prison for her feminist research and activism (see our [Annual Report 2016](#)). This decision was made to ensure that our network remains driven by our feminist and human rights commitments, and so that we can continue the prioritization of women's interests by following the wishes of the women within our network. We are ever grateful to all the women who have given their time, knowledge, and commitment since 2017 to make our programs and outreach possible. With the end of the 5-year moratorium, WLUML is excited to engage with external donors again to broaden the execution of our projects and expand our organizational capacity for impact in our areas of work.

WLUML Board Members



Alex McCarthy



Amal Elmohandes



Amna Nasir



Homa Hoodfar



Mona Tajali



Najia Haneefi



Naureen Shameem



Vrinda Narain



Zarqa Yaftali



Our Council, Fellows & Interns



We express gratitude to our council members, fellows and interns for their ongoing dedication to direct and execute the initiatives of WLUMML throughout the year.

International Council

Thank you to our International Council members who continued to steer and guide WLUMML's activities throughout the year. They have all been at the forefront, promoting women's human rights, working to end discrimination against women in the name of religion and culture, and striving towards a more equitable and peaceful world.

Ada Romero
Anniesa Hussain
Camilla Gray
Dana Kamour
Haddy Jatou Jonga
Hilal Işık
Humaira Saqib
Ifra Asad
Isabel Marler



Mahboubah Abbasgholizadeh
Maria Kardashevskaya
Najla Raheel
Paky Eckerström
Salam Zada
Sara López Izquierdo
Saira K Zuberi
Setenay Mutlu Adisönmez
Suzanna Eddyono

Fellows and Interns

And, thank you to our 2023 fellows who joined us to kick start our advocacy and research programs: 'Women Centered Islamic Perspectives', Women Claiming Public Spaces, Iranian Bill of Rights Fellows, Action for Afghanistan (Demanding Justice, Freedom and Participation for the Women of Afghanistan)



Farinaz Basmech
Ghazaleh Ebnenasi
Hanieh Haji Molana
Iqra Khan

Larissa Freitas
Maira Asif
Mohamad Ali Mir
Nor Ismah

Patricia Tulai
Rida Khan
Ulya Fikriyati
Yuyun Sriwahyuni

"WLUMML's strength has always been and continues to be in the diversity of our networkers. Diversity of perspective forces us to grow intellectually and exercise empathy. Diversity of knowledge and skills means that we all become better-equipped advocates to challenge gender violence and injustice. And, our diversity of character means continually recognizing and respecting the value that each individual brings."

Dana Kamour, WLUMML Council Member



WLUML, as a **feminist think tank**, hopes to contribute to future projects and activist works by making the knowledge and experience gained in the field of women’s rights accessible. This year WLUML’s board members wrote several articles and accepted numerous invitations for media interviews to raise awareness of developments in Iran and Afghanistan.



Authors Amplified: How Women in Iran and Turkey Are ‘Demanding a Seat at the Table’ with Dr. Mona Tajali | Global Atlanta's Authors Amplified series, sponsored by the Atlanta Global Studies Center



The problem is not only hijab with WLUML’s Dr. Homa Hoodfar and Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh | VOA Farsi



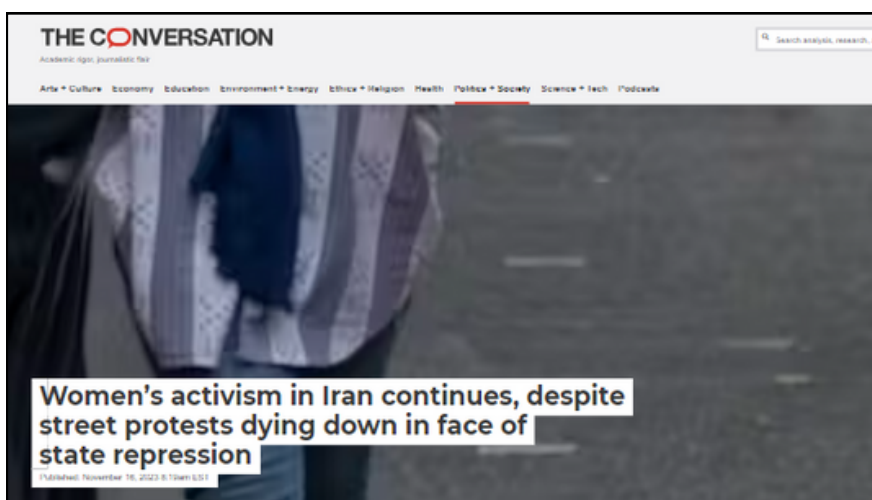
Women, Life, Freedom: A Teach-in on the women-led protests in Iran with Dr. Mona Tajali | Charis Circle'



The Taliban's war on women in Afghanistan must be formally recognized as gender apartheid by Vrinda Narain | The Conversation



UN must recognize gender apartheid in Afghanistan by Dr. Homa Hoodfar and Lauryn Oates | Ottawa Citizen



Women's activism in Iran continues, despite street protests dying down in the face of state repression by Dr. Mona Tajali | The Conversation



Constitutionalizing Women's Rights

WLUML's seminal work on constitutionalizing women's rights started in 2020, led by a team of scholars and feminist constitutional experts from Iranian, Indian, and other Muslim heritage. The multi-phased project aims to develop a feminist framework for constitution drafting and design, which though premised on secular, gender equality and human rights is informed and supported by liberal Islamic perspectives. Focusing on Iran and other Muslim-majority countries facing political crises, the project believes that women, if organized and vocal about their visions and demands for post-conflict society, can drive significant positive social and political change. The initiative is a transnational, interdisciplinary, collaborative effort involving expert members, including Board Members of Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), with support from the Faculty of Law and the McGill University Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP).

Project Phases and Outcomes

1. Scholarly Review Feminist constitutionalists, public policy analysts, and Islamic legal theory experts from Afghanistan, Iran, and the Middle East collaborated through webinars and exchanges, resulting in a Handbook on the Feminist Framework for constitutional drafting, which was published in a special issue of the Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law & Practice (Volume 19, Issue 1, 2023) to reach much wider audiences who are interested in or are working on this topic.

2. Advocacy Tool Kit We plan to develop a Tool Kit for writing a feminist Constitution, adaptable for Muslim-majority nations engaging in constitution writing or reform. The Kit will guide the inclusion of women's rights using a secular framework with inspiration from liberal Islamic perspectives, while also taking into consideration historical and post-colonial best practices of constitutionalizing women's rights. We hope to complete the first phase of this section of the program in 2024.

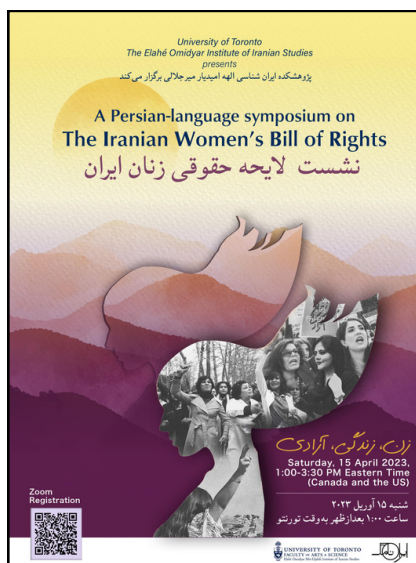
3. A Bill of Rights of Women/Women's Charter: This project is informed by our research on the history of women's charters and the extent to which women have been able to utilize these charters as a means of mobilizing and lobbying for their rights, and in some cases, influencing the writing of new constitutions or the reform of existing ones. As part of our Constitutionalizing Women project, we aim to support feminist movements in various countries, particularly those facing political conflict or upheaval, in developing their own Charter or Bill of Rights.

To achieve this goal, we hosted the Feminist Collective for Women, Life, and Freedom and supported them in drafting a Bill which was subsequently launched as a Living Draft on March 8, 2023, in both Farsi and English. Members of the collective, including a couple of WLUML board members, conducted several interviews with conventional radio and television, as well as launched a social media campaign, and disseminated the Bill to both Iranian feminist circles inside Iran and women's organizations in the diaspora. WLUML is also hosting the website for the bill of rights.

Constitutionalizing Women's Rights

3. A Bill of Rights of Women/Women's Charter (cont.): The document has been disseminated through various channels, including our website, traditional Farsi media, as well as international media outlets such as BBC, VOA, Iran Intl, Radio Zamaneh, CBC Radio, CNN, and social media to encourage further consultation and discussions.

We organized a consultation webinar on April 15, in which more than 180 women from inside and outside Iran, and some from Kabul, participated. With the support of WLUML, further consultation meetings were organized in person and on Zoom, and over 100 comments were received. WLUML supported the process of revisions, and in October 2023, facilitated three members of the Feminist Collective, including two WLUML board members, to travel to Turkey, where many Iranian opposition groups are based. We also arranged for some Iranians to join a consultation workshop. Later, the group went to Berlin, another city where many opposition groups are based, and had another in-person consultation meeting. We hope that this document will raise consciousness and provide mobilization and lobbying tools for activists to use constitutional avenues for negotiations with political forces for feminist social change. Further consultation meetings are planned for the first quarter of 2024. The following posters show our work from 2023 to raise awareness about the Bill of Rights of Women/ Women's Charter through events, webinars, and discussions with regional feminists and women right's defenders.



Constitutionalizing Women's Rights

4. Women's Political Architecture/ Machinery: The framework of Women's Political Architecture/Machinery serves as a crucial avenue for effectively addressing women's rights and promoting gender equality, especially in key areas such as education, legal reform, economic empowerment, political participation, and the eradication of violence against women. Starting in 2022, this project component has included several workshops, a high-profile webinar with the Middle East Institute at Harvard Kennedy School, and a successful CSW67 panel with experts from Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. Recognizing the disempowering impact of conservative forces in Muslim countries, WLUML orchestrated a successful panel on this subject during CSW 67 on March 14, 2023.

Our commitment to examining the effectiveness of women's machinery is longstanding, with Dossier 29 published in 2009, edited by Rashida Manjoo United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (2009 to 2015), presenting global case studies to identify structures that have best served women. Recognizing its significance, women's machinery constitutes the fourth pillar of our program dedicated to constitutionalizing women's rights. We are actively seeking funds to convene experts for a small in-person meeting, aiming to produce a publication for those engaged in this field. Additionally, we plan to create a series of short interviews on the topic to support advocates of women's rights.

Register [here](#) in advance for this meeting

14 March 2023
8:30 - 11:00 EST

WOMEN'S MACHINERY AND CHALLENGES OF INEQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Our speakers

PROF RASHIDA MANJOO, DR. SINA SAMAR, KHAWAR HUNTAL, DR. HOMA TAJALI, SHIREEN PERVIN HUQ, DR. SRI WIYANTI EDDYONO, PROF. VRINDA NARAIN, PROF. HOMA HODGFAR, SELEN LERMOŠLU YILMAZ

Since the setting up of the Committee of Women's Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Women's Machinery at both the state and the UN level has been identified by women's movements and experts as a channel to effectively address women's rights and gender equality, particularly in the areas of education, legal reform, economic empowerment and political participation and the eradication of violence against women.

However, over the last decade, we have observed that many states in the North and South, under various pretexts, have been disempowering women's machinery. As the pendulum of the world's politics is moving to the right with both overt and covert attack on women's rights. It is clear that there is an urgent need for more proactive types of machinery and mechanism to push back the negative trend against social, legal and political equality at all levels of society.

This panel is proposing to revisit the debates surrounding various forms of women's machinery in Muslim contexts where, despite much advancement, women continue to face serious gender-based violence and discrimination justified in the name of religion and traditions, particularly in the political and public sphere.

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, WLUML, NGO CSW67 FORUM, Shirkat Gah, ALTERNATIVE LINKS

Future Plan: The project will continue workshops, webinars, and in-person meetings to develop the Tool Kit, hold consultations for the Bill of Rights for other countries, explore effective women's political machinery models and engage the broader public through media interactions.



Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute

Since its foundation in the mid-1980s, WLUMML has had a long history of fostering networking opportunities and training workshops for feminists in Muslim societies, including via its Feminism in the Muslim World Leadership Institutes, which started in 1998. WLUMML's rich history as a feminist solidarity network across the Muslim-majority world, as well as its past experiences of training and supporting feminist activists, positions it well to ensure the current political transformations unfolding across the region, especially in Iran and Afghanistan, center gender equality. With turning its attention to work with youth and younger women, WLUMML's leadership has revised and updated its former Feminist Leadership Institutes by launching the Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI) in 2023.

The Institute is 'transformative' because it is designed to stimulate an internal change in perception and understanding of the sources of gender discrimination. Participants are encouraged to think critically and engage with the world using feminist prisms of understanding. TFLI understands 'leadership' broadly, emphasizing individual or collective ability to positively impact gender relations and rights at the national, regional, local, and private levels. The Institute is feminist as it uses an intersectional lens in which particular attention is paid to the experiences and strategies of diverse identities and positionalities across Muslim majority contexts, including ethnic and religious minorities for training women in feminist social change.

WLUMML's board appointed Dr. Mona Tajali, a long-term WLUMML collaborator, educator, and an Executive Board Member, with the support of other members, to direct this institute by designing a revamped educational program to train the young generation of feminists across the region. The hybrid (online and in-person) trainings will be delivered across three different levels: national, regional, and global; with appropriate contextual adaptations, prioritizing young feminists from Iran and Afghanistan as participants in the first phase of the Institute. The languages prioritized for the initial stages of the Institute will be Dari and Farsi, followed by Arabic. The national-level curriculum, for which we are currently seeking funding, will prepare participants for advancement into the regional and transnational levels and spheres of activism. WLUMML board member Mona Tajali will lead the curricular design process, with support from Farsi/Dari co-board members Homa Hoodfar, Zarqa Yaftali, Najila Haneefi, and Najla Raheel.

TFLI aims to provide grassroots activists with the political knowledge and training to organize for change, empowering the younger generation of activists who are aware of their needs but may need additional knowledge and guidance of the lessons learned from the long history of their local feminist activism, or of international and global human rights regimes. The Institute aims to fill the gaps that were raised to us by local activists who wished for greater integration and exposure to the transnational feminist solidarity network.

NO WOMEN, NO PEACE

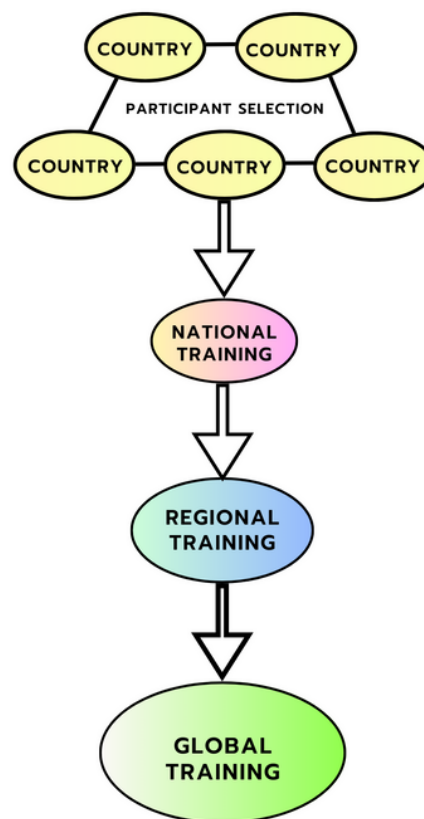




Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute

Core Modules:

- Feminist Thought and Practice: An Introduction
- Women and Feminism: From the local to the global and back
- Women's resistance and leadership
- Feminist consciousness-raising through art
- Transnational solidarity networks across Muslim contexts
- International Human Rights Documents and Women's Rights
- Women's Rights Activism during Transitions and Beyond
- Institutionalization of Women's Rights
- Continuation of Feminist Activism
- English for Activism (for non-English speaking participants advancing to the next level)



McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism | Centre sur les droits de la personne et le pluralisme juridique de McGill | WLUML | McGill | Faculty of Law | Faculté de Droit

Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here:
Challenging Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan
Karima Bennouna in conversation with Horia Mosadiq

Friday, September 8, 2023
9:00 – 10:30 AM (ET)
Via Zoom
<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/86740286450>

Professor Karima Bennouna (University of Michigan) and Horia Mosadiq, leading Afghan human rights defender, will address the question of gender apartheid in Afghanistan. Marking the 10th anniversary of the release of Prof. Bennouna's book, *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism*, they will discuss the international and local dimensions of women's rights advocates' struggles against fundamentalisms across the region in the last decade.

TFLI Inauguration Lecture

Our seminal webinar by Karime Bennouna and Horia Mosadiq on the 10th Anniversary of Bennouna's book "Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here" poignantly inaugurated WLUML's Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI). The webinar's theme of advocacy for the recognition of gender apartheid and the horrendous ban on women's education affirmed TFLI's mission to train young feminists from Muslim contexts to fight for their rights in these increasingly conservative times.



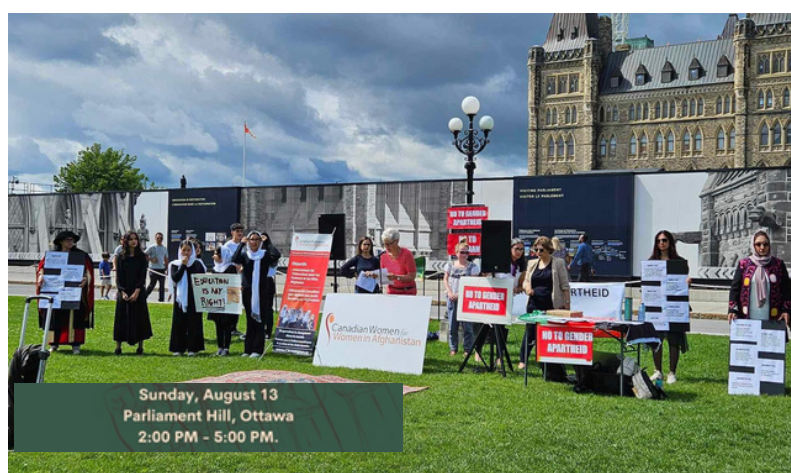
Our Programs and Activities



Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: Women's Struggle for Dignity

Today, there is consensus among rights experts, Afghan women activists, scholars, and legal scholars, among others, that the Taliban's policies and behavior constitute gender apartheid: "the use of the systematic segregation of the sexes imposed through law and policy as a governing ideology". WLUML's "Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: Women's Struggle for Dignity" project is a critical campaign aimed at addressing systemic and life-threatening institutionalized gender-based discrimination and human rights abuses against women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran. We have responded with a call to recognize Gender Apartheid as an international crime against humanity, as it is the only appropriate term that captures the grotesqueness of the Taliban's institutionalized government policy of gender persecution. The term gender apartheid was first coined in the 1980s in reaction to the Islamic Republic of Iran's laws that legally made women worth half as much as men, and then used again in the 1990s during the Taliban's first period of rule in Afghanistan. However, in the 80s international organizations including the UN and Amnesty Intl. didn't consider gender equality a human rights and political concern. Coming together with other women's organizations after the 1995 Beijing Conference, WLUML has been calling for the recognition of gender apartheid as a crime since the Taliban 1.0 regime.

The campaign has been devised through deliberations with Afghan women partner organizations in Afghanistan as well as Afghan women activists in Turkey, Iran, Germany, and the UK in continuation of WLUML's previous work on No Peace Without Women's Rights in Afghanistan (2020-2021) which championed women's inclusion in Afghanistan's peace negotiations.



International Day of Peace

The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies, University of Toronto, in collaboration with Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), CW4wafghan.ca, & the Women's Regional Network jointly present

ZOOM REGISTRATION

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Thursday, 21 September 2023
2:00-4:00 p.m. Eastern Time,
University of Toronto, History Conference Room,
332088 (2nd Floor)
Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St George St, Toronto, ON M5S 3G3

END GENDER APARTHEID, BUILD PEACE

On this International Day of Peace, we are pleased to present a special solidarity event with women in Iran and Afghanistan. Their struggle continues as they work to end gender apartheid and build peace in their countries and worldwide. Please join us for a strategic discussion focused on advocating for recognizing gender apartheid as a crime against humanity.

Moderators:
Sarah Keeler (CW4Wafghan) & Nargis Nohar (WRN & CEFA)

Discussants:
Homa Hoodfar
Concordia University (WLUML)
Freshta Karimi
Da Qanoon Ghushtonky (In Search of Justice)
Vrinda Narain
Faculty of Law, McGill University (WLUML)
Zarqa Yaffali
WCLRF & WLUML

Speakers
Dr. Shirin Ebadi
Iranian Women's Rights Advocate and Nobel Laureate
Sima Samar
Former Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
Heather Barr
Director of Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch



Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: Women's Struggle for Dignity

From March 2023 onwards, we reached out to women's rights defender organizations across Asia through our letters and statements, and held an informational meeting in August 2023 as part of our coalition-building efforts. On Aug 13, WLUML decried the anniversary of the return of the Taliban to power with a protest outside Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada. We also published a [statement](#) outlining their gross violations of women's rights, urging state actors to recognize the Taliban's gender apartheid regime as a crime against humanity. On 21st September, we organized a webinar on "End Gender Apartheid; Build Peace" with Shirin Ebadi, Iranian Nobel Laureate; Sima Sama, Former Chairperson of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission; and Heather Barr, Director of Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch to express our solidarity with the women of Iran and Afghanistan.

Working in consultation with our Afghan partners, we organized a meeting in London on 21st Oct with women leaders of Afghanistan including Shokriah Faawzieh and 8 others who represented several women's rights organizations to understand the exigencies of Afghan women under the Taliban. To lobby government officials, the WLUML team also met with officials from the German Foreign Office and Canadian Government officials to garner their support for the recognition of Gender Apartheid as a crime against humanity. WLUML members have also participated in several webinars and spoken on media channels about the necessity of the Stop Gender Apartheid campaign.

[WLUML's campaign](#) is seeking to mobilize international action and create international recognition of gender apartheid as a crime against humanity, drawing parallels with the established conventions against racial apartheid. Through our outreach and conscience-raising efforts through webinars, public statements, and media platforms, we have formed a coalition against gender apartheid with organizations and individuals from across the world.



COALITION AGAINST GENDER APARTHEID

[WLUML](#), [CW4WAfghan](#), [Women's Regional Network](#), [Women's Advocacy Committee](#), and allied organizations and activists initiated a 'Call for Solidarity and Action: Naming and Ending Gender Apartheid' which has been signed by 88 organizations worldwide as well as 93 activists and women's rights defenders, including Iranian Noble Laureate Shirin Ebadi.



Our Programs and Activities



Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan WLUML at CSW67

Given that 2023 marked the two years since all educational institutes were closed for Afghan girls above 6 years of age under the Taliban gender apartheid regime, a Parallel Session to the UN Commission on the Status of Women on the topic “Gender persecution in Afghanistan’s education crisis: proposing innovative responses from a human rights-based approach” was hosted by WLUML, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, and Human Rights Watch. The vital discussion looked at the complexities of Afghanistan’s deepening education crisis from a human rights perspective. The session addressed education as it links to the country’s wider humanitarian emergency and the erasure of women and girls from public life, which has led to the forced displacement of millions. Speakers proposed solutions and shared advocacy strategies to protect the right to learn and enhance access to safe, inclusive, and quality education for all through digital innovation, regional collaboration, and humanitarian services.

GENDER PERSECUTION IN AFGHANISTAN'S EDUCATION CRISIS: PROPOSING INNOVATIVE RESPONSES FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

a parallel session to the UN Commission on the Status of Women

with opening remarks from Farida Shaheed
UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

LIVE ON ZOOM
REGISTER <https://bit.ly/NGOCSW67>

sponsored by

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

WLUML

WEDNESDAY MARCH 15TH, 10AM ET / 3PM CET / 6:30PM KABUL

#LEATHERLEARN

NGO CSW67 FORUM

Lauryn Oates, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan

Nick Sabato, Connected Learning in Crisis

Svetlo Muhammad Ishoq, Chadari Project

Sahar Fetrat, Human Rights Watch

Hena Takal, Women Living Under Muslim Laws

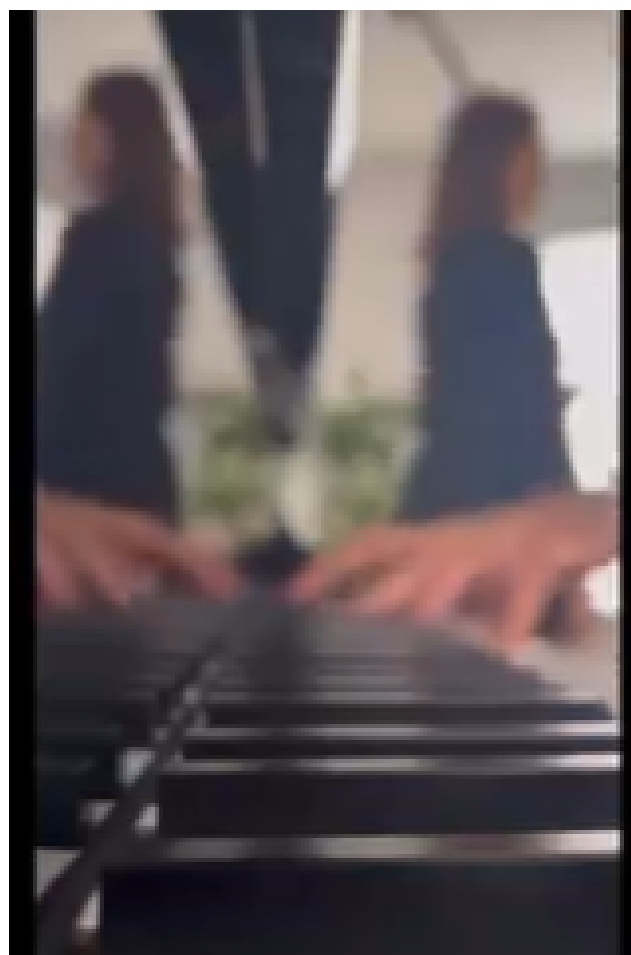
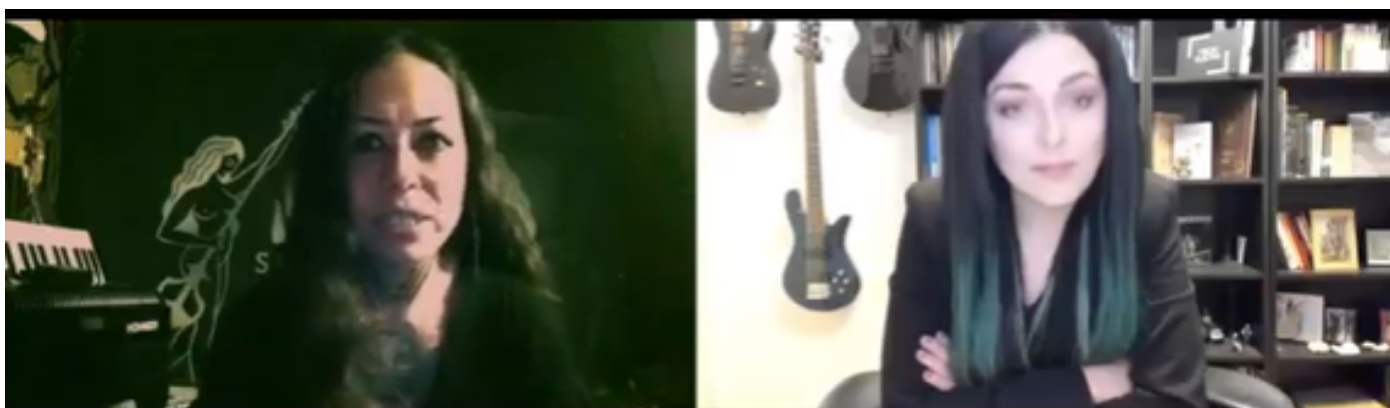




16 Days of Activism against GBV

In a harmonious stand for justice, WLUML's campaign echoed the resilient voices of artists from Iran and Afghanistan during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence sharing songs of protest on our social media through e-concerts. Brave and talented artists were interviewed by our Council member Pasqualina Eckerström, a Doctoral Researcher in Religious Studies at the University of Helsinki. We believe singing transcends mere melody, becoming a powerful form of dissent, weaving tales of resistance and fortitude against oppression.

Featuring the fearless Charuk, Shaya Zandi, and Sara in conversation with Pasqualina





Our Programs and Activities



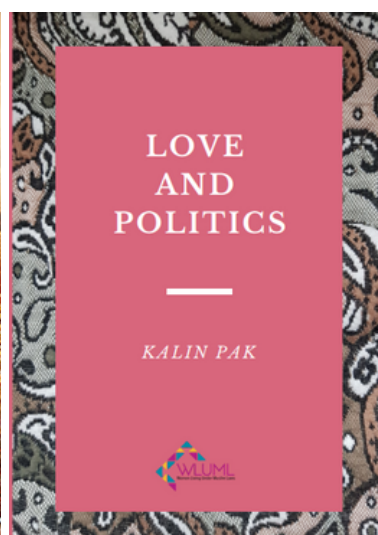
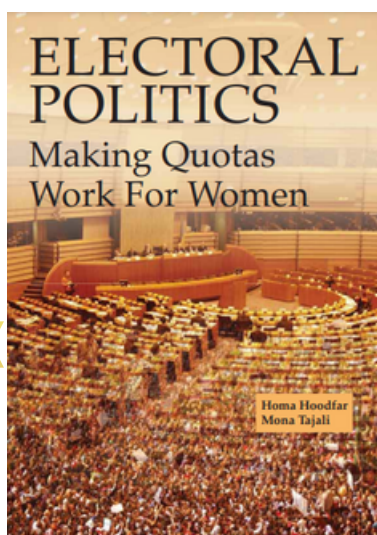
In 2024, WLUML will also be rebooting two of its previous projects, as listed below.

Women and Politics

Most states across the globe, including in the Muslim world, recognize women's legal right to participate in politics, or to elect and be elected to political office and other representative bodies. Despite this recognition, however, to date, women continue to be underrepresented in most political institutions. The program is the result of several earlier initiatives. WLUML's research into electoral politics and female representation began in 2008 and the work is documented by several of our [publications](#). WLUML recognized that while many women in Muslim contexts now have the legal right to hold positions of power, they face harassment which severely inhibits their ability to safely benefit from these laws. Women and Politics was therefore designed to support feminist activism for greater representation, free from intimidation and harassment, and to develop a comparative study of women's political roles and rights in various Muslim countries. For 2024, Dr. Mona Tajali and Dr. Homa Hoodfar are working on a new research report looking at strategies for improving women's representation in formal politics.

Love as Politics

In the name of religion – be it Islam, Christianity, or other religious beliefs – or in the name of cultural purity and tradition, women have been subjected to discriminatory practices, codes of conduct, and laws with the ultimate goal of controlling their sexuality and excluding them from public life. These practices and laws constitute and reinforce insidious forms of violence against women. Today, we see several Muslim-majority states becoming increasingly conservative, yet, feminist and progressive movements continue to organize and challenge conservative interpretations and the policing of sexual morality. The Love as Politics project seeks to interrogate how power holders have politicized love, demonstrating a conservative gender perspective and ideology that infantilizes women and sexual minorities, disempowers them, and characterizes them as without agency or autonomy and unable to enter into consensual relationships. Activities for 2024 including a book project are being finalized at the moment.





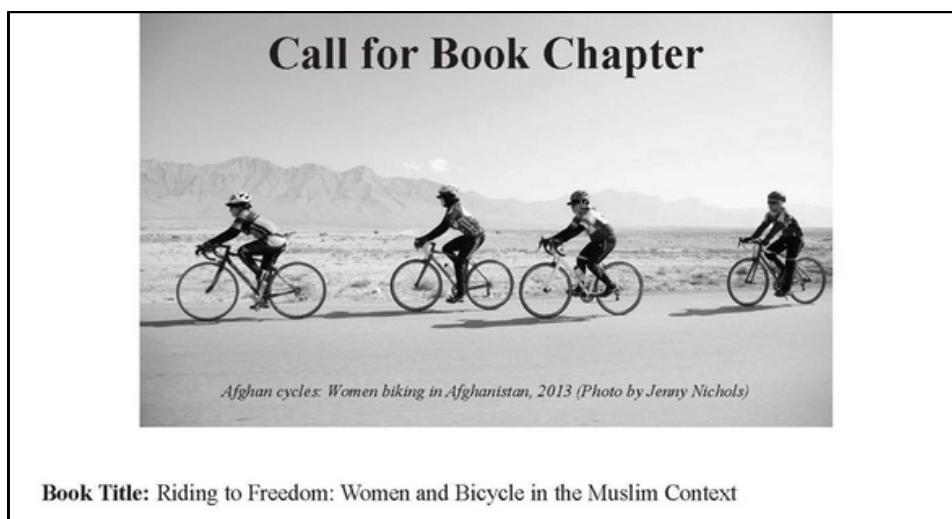
As a feminist think tank, WLUMML's research and publications provide information about the lives, struggles, and strategies of women living in diverse Muslim communities and countries. Our publications, lectures, and webinars aim to support the struggle for women's equality and autonomy and the promotion of women's human rights worldwide. Eradication of all forms of violence, be it legal, physical, economic, spiritual, or psychological, forms the heart of WLUMML's activism and advocacy. We aspire to provide a collective, transnational, and intergenerational space to share experiences, strategies, analyses, and initiatives.

Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: Context, Conditions and Campaigns

As part of WLUMML's Stop Gender Apartheid campaign, a short book exploring the case study of Afghanistan and the Taliban's oppression of gender regimes will be published in 2024. The book contextualized in the gendered history and socio-economic conditions of Afghanistan, a country suffering from decades of militarism and fundamentalism, draws comparisons between gender apartheid in Afghanistan and racial apartheid in South Africa, compares arguments for and against recognition of gender apartheid as an international crime against humanity and proposes advocacy strategies for holding the Taliban accountable.

Riding to Freedom: Women and Bicycle in the Muslim Context

In 2018 WLUMML launched the program Women Reclaiming Public Spaces to research and document initiatives of women reclaiming public spaces, to understand their successes and setbacks, and to facilitate the sharing of experiences between women taking action to increase safe access to public arenas, free from harassment. As part of this project in 2023, WLUMML has launched a book project titled *Riding to Freedom: Women and Bicycle in the Muslim Context*. The goal of the book is to bring together various debates and views on women and bicycles in Muslim-majority countries, as well as the initiatives that women have taken up in promoting and facilitating women's bicycle riding within the public space. These include engaging in public discussions to counteract and resist the cultural, ideological, legal, or religiously imposed limitation on women by conventions such as religion, states, or non-state actors. The book with contributions from Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, and diaspora Muslims is set to be published in 2024.





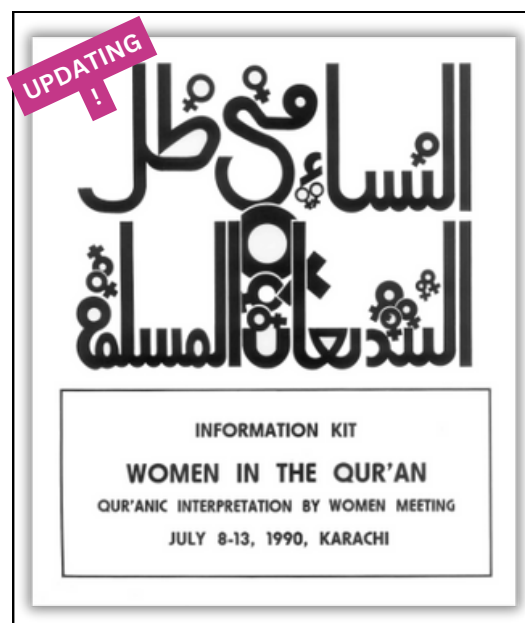
Research Report on intl. human rights machinery of UN Women

The UN and particularly UN women has emerged as an important space for women's rights advocacy, particularly for women who live in undemocratic states. We felt that many young network members are interested in learning more about the working and the history of the UN women. They are interested in ways to access and learn about the spaces and opportunities that the UN Women provides for advocates, including the possibility of working with the organization. To this end, our research group has prepared a comprehensive exploration of the role and impact of UN Women in advancing gender equality, women's empowerment, and peacebuilding. It traces the evolution of women's roles within the UN and explains the rationale behind the formation of UN Women. The book explores the institutional working of UN Women as well as its impactful initiatives such as the Women2030, which focuses on women's empowerment in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 'HeForShe' campaign, the "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces" program and UN Women's contributions to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. It demystifies the crucial role of UN Women and allied organizations in creating an inclusive, equitable, and peaceful world, emphasizing the need for collaboration and ongoing progress toward gender equality. The report will be published in 2024.

Islamic and Human Rights: Quranic Kit

In early 2020, WLUMML consulted Afghan women leaders who foresaw the US-Taliban negotiations leading to a regression of women's rights in Afghanistan. The consultations led to the demand for creating Islamic and secular arguments in favor of women's rights and educating various stakeholders, including scholars, advocates, policymakers, and the general public, leading to the formation of WLUMML's Islam and Women's Human Rights project.

The project aims to increase the capacity of women, leaders, and activists to defend women's rights and gender equality, especially in law and policy-making, through progressive religious interpretations and human rights arguments. It seeks to educate the public, especially Muslim women about their rights and enable them to articulate and defend them through Islamic and universal human rights perspectives. To this effect, we are currently updating our 1990 Quranic Kit which countered the monopoly of men in tafsir (exegesis) and ijihad (logical deduction).





Solidarity with Women's Human Rights Defenders



WLUML (Women Living Under Muslim Laws) deeply values collaborations with other women's rights defenders, seeing these partnerships as vital to its mission. Such connections enable WLUML to share resources, strengthen advocacy efforts, and foster a global network committed to feminist social change.

WLUML is actively building solidarity with the **Turkish Feminist Network Esik**. Our collective webinar including feminist activists from Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey successfully drew an audience of 100+ people in 2023. WLUML board members also traveled to Turkey and met with Turkish feminists in our effort to build a regional solidarity network between Turkish, Iranian, and Afghan WRDs.

REGIONAL COALITION
OF WHRDs | in the Middle East
and North Africa

Backlash against women's rights and our strategies

Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan

Opening Remarks and Moderation: Özlem Altıok
Women's Platform for Equality, Turkey (Eşik)

Speakers:

Talibanization: State of patriarchy
Yakın Ertürk, Professor Emerita, Middle East Technical University

Jin, Jiyan, Azadi in practice: Iranian Women's Bill of Rights
Mona Tajali, Women Living under Muslim Laws

Attacks on equality and secularism: Ongoing efforts to write "from scratch" a family law and a new Constitution in Turkey
Hülya Gülbahar, Women's Platform for Equality, Turkey (Eşik)

The International Context of Women's Rights in Turkey and Turkish Foreign Policy
Zeynep Alemdar, Women in Foreign Policy Initiative

International obligation to recognize Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan
Zarqa Yaftali, Women and Children Legal Research Foundation

Afghan Women Coalition for Change
Aliye Yılmaz, Süleyman Demirel University

Discussant: Homa Hoodfar, Women Living under Muslim Laws

Q&A and discussion

**1 October 2023
Sunday
Time: 16.00 - 18.30
(Istanbul time)**

Zoom meeting ID: 812 3275 8741
Simultaneous English-Turkish translation will be provided.

mor cizgi **WLUML** **eşik**

WLUML is also a member of the Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in MENA. **WHRDMENA**, a network of human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa, focuses on protecting public sector defenders, highlighting violations against them, and providing support through advocacy, experience sharing, and knowledge production. They aim to challenge patriarchal norms and gender discrimination, creating safe spaces for these activities.

THE WORLD TODAY PRESENTS

**Women Transforming Societies:
The Global Fight for Human Rights**

Tuesday, March 14, 2023 | 4:00pm-5:00pm ET
Hybrid Event | World Forum and Zoom

Hagir Elsheikh
Owner and CEO,
Tomorrow's Smile Inc.

Homa Hoodfar
Professor Emerita of
Anthropology,
Concordia University

Siri May
Associate Director for
Global Advocacy,
Center for Reproductive
Rights

**Moderated By
LeShawn R. Jefferson**
Senior Executive
Director,
Perry World House

Maha Amin

PERRY WORLD HOUSE **Middle East Center** **Penn Women's Center**



WLUML's commitment to feminist solidarity, social justice, peace, and equality is exemplified through its impactful outreach. Through written blogs and podcasts, WLUML advocates for equality, amplifies feminist voices, and fosters a global network, catalyzing positive change for women navigating diverse Muslim contexts.



Don't let Islamophobia be the legacy by Pasqualina Eckerström

- Cautions Western media to keep its focus on the Iranian regime's spiritual gaslighting and legacy of control instead of making women's protests against Hijab about religion



Where there is silence, there is death. Make sure that they are heard by Pasqualina Eckerström

- Shares Iranian government's censorship of protests and the resistance message: by young Iranians "If they try to blind you, see, share the videos of what they are doing and if they try to silence us, be our voice."



The Day for Poetry, Chocolate, Roses, and Love: An Afghan Experience by Hena Takal

- Shares Afghan youth's resistance against Taliban's ban on Valentine's Day through songs like: I kiss you amid Taliban and I am not afraid



Why the women of Afghanistan's support for the Iran uprising is a lesson to us all by Anniesa Hussain

- Encourages trans-national, cross-topic solidarity building of Iranian and Afghan women for genuine revolutionary movements



Türkiye's Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention by Vrinda Narain

- Condemns Turkey's shameful withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention which is a binding global treaty against gender-based violence.

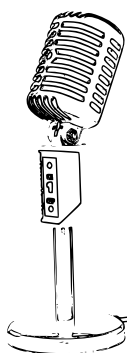


Iranian schoolgirls under attack: Girls fighting for their right to education by Ali Mir

- Asserts that terrorizing schoolgirls and depriving them of access to education is another validation of the gender apartheid in Iran



WLUML's Podcast is its storytelling space for anyone striving for individual and/or collective autonomy within Muslim countries and communities, but whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by patriarchal and/or authoritarian interpretations of Islam. This podcast aims to provide a channel of communication and solidarity as we work together towards the realization of gender justice, equality, and human rights.



In conversation with Najila Raheel, Afghanistan renowned Human Rights Lawyer

In this episode, WLUML talks to Najla Raheel, Vice President of the Independent Bar Association of Afghanistan. Prior to being forced to leave her country after the Taliban takeover in 2021, Najla was a fierce and courageous advocate for many women, helping to spotlight their basic rights in Afghan society. Najla talks about her involvement in the 2011 Farkhunda Malikzada case, her experiences as a public woman in a patriarchal society and rebuilding her life in Canada to further her commitment to women and girls in Afghanistan.

“Recognizing gender apartheid matters. Such recognition advocates for a world where equality between women and men isn't just an aspiration but a fundamental right, reshaping societies for the better.”

Sara López Izquierdo, WLUML Council Member



Our Social Media



WLUML leveraged various social media platforms, including Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, to amplify the voices of partner organizations and networks throughout 2023. We focused on supporting causes such as Afghan women's rights and the Iranian Women, Life, Freedom Campaign.

Through these online channels, WLUML provided weekly news updates as part of our Stop Gender Apartheid Campaign, diligently monitoring developments in the worsening situation of women's rights in Afghanistan under the Taliban. We also used our social media channels to issue public statements and circulate petitions, effectively raising awareness and garnering support for our initiatives.

Notably, our activities on 16 days of activism against GBV took place entirely through our social media. We amplified the voices of Iranian and Afghan artists and musicians through our e-concert, asserting the role of music and dance in protest against the fundamentalist authoritarianism of Iranian authorities and the Afghan Taliban.

WLUML maintained a consistent online presence, disseminating information and promoting its projects. In 2023, WLUML's use of social media served as a vital tool for communication, advocacy, and the dissemination of information, contributing to its ongoing efforts in the pursuit of gender justice.



Follow us here:





Support and solidarity are a major pillar of WLUML's activities and a key reason for our creation. At a time when human rights organizations did not recognize women advocates who were arrested or harassed by the state or non-state actors, nor did they recognize them as political actors and prisoners of conscience, WLUML saw the necessity to support women endeavoring for gender equality. Today WLUML is happy to know that as a result of the women's and feminist movement defending women's rights defenders has become a central part of all human rights organisations. In these illiberal times of back-treading on women's rights, we continue our mission to promote women's human rights and gender equality by mobilizing our network in support of women's advocates and encouraging young feminists to join our ranks in the fight for equality.

Against WFP Management's Grave Breaches of Humanitarian Principles/Gaza

McCain, a former Halifax Forum Board member, addressed the forum as the WFP Executive Director and spoke about the dialectical relationship between conflict and hunger. While providing numerous examples where food is used as a tool for subjugation from the WFP experience, she notably omitted any mention of the 2 million Palestinians that are starving in Gaza at this very time due to the Israeli occupation's weaponization of food. With her seated in the front row, next to Ehud Barak, the Halifax Forum granted the annual John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service, which holds her late husband's name, to the People of "Israel". McCain overreached her delegated authority which reflected negatively not only on her position as a United Nations personnel but also on the United Nations as a whole. For all the reasons above, we demand that Cindy McCain be held accountable and expelled immediately from her position as WFP Executive Director.

Letter to Government of Canada to recognize Gender Apartheid as a crime 12/23

The considerable number of petitions on this issue from international civil society organizations indicates that global public opinion supports the recognition of gender apartheid as a crime against humanity. They are well aware that this extremist ideology and practices will not be contained within one country but will have broader regional and global implications, and the international community and nation-states must take appropriate action. We, therefore, urge the government of Canada to continue to act per its foreign policy, defending women's rights and using all channels available to ensure gender apartheid is recognized by the UN as a crime against humanity.





Standing in Solidarity: Advocating for the Rights & Voices of Afghan Women 11/6/23

For over a month, WHRDs Neda Parwani, Zholia Parsi, her son, and recently Manizha Sediqi, have been forcibly taken by the Taliban. These WHRDs have been advocating for women's rights in Afghanistan, the only country in the world where women are denied secondary and higher education. Zholia Parsi, speaking to Femena in August 2023, expressed frustrations about the impact of their struggles: 'In an attempt to demand our rights, I started protesting on the streets. My protests feel futile, with little hope for change.' Since the imprisonment of Zholia, Neda, and Manizha, women protesters across Afghanistan continue to persist and resist the Taliban. They conduct indoor protests, urging the international community to hold the Taliban accountable.

Statement Signed by WLUML United Against Ethnic Cleansing in Palestine! 10/10/23

The Regional Coalition for Women Human Rights Defenders in South West Asia and North Africa (WHRDMENA) stands in solidarity with the Palestinian nation against the genocidal policies of Israel and the irresponsible statements of the governments of the United States and the European Union which amount to a blanket approval of the unrestrained use of force against the blockaded civilian population of Gaza. We call upon international mandate holders, defenders of human rights, and all people of conscience to immediately and unequivocally call upon the occupying forces to halt the indiscriminate targeting of civilians which amounts to a pre-meditated and systemic ethnic cleansing of Gaza of its native Palestinian population.

One Year after the killing of Mahsa Amini 09/16/23

A year has passed since the killing of the young woman Mahsa Amini and yet the Islamic Republic of Iran's war on women has not ceased to wage. After her death, Iranians have stood up and demonstrated against the repression, thus showing the vast discontent with the regime. These events led forces to exert more dominance and instill fear in the population, especially towards women and girls which have, and still are, the main focus for discriminatory laws. We at WLUML condemn the repression taking place in Iran against its civilization, and once again demand that the regime stop its war against women and girls!



Naming and Ending Gender Apartheid 09/19/23

As international legal scholar Karima Bennouna points out, “The concept of gender apartheid offers not only a factually accurate description, and one that carries an appropriate stigma, but also an essential mechanism for generating some global legal accountability for the Taliban’s return to power—which was a transnationally created disaster”... “the arsenal of international law must now be enhanced and fully deployed. This matters most for Afghans, but it is also critical for the credibility of the international law project and the U.N. system going forward.” Gender apartheid, like racial apartheid, must be recognized as an international crime, specifically a crime against humanity. In the international legal system, there are currently established categories of violations that prohibit discrimination and persecution on the basis of sex and gender. Those existing statutes and conventions lay the foundational framework for an international convention to deter and criminalize the crime of gender apartheid. The existing conventions and standards on racial apartheid need to be directly applied to gender apartheid.

Statement & Demands on the Disastrous Anniversary of the Taliban’s Return 8/15/23

Today, there is consensus among human rights experts, Afghan and Iranian women activists, scholars, and legal scholars, among others, that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Taliban’s policies and behavior constitute gender apartheid: “the use of the systematic segregation of the sexes imposed through law and policy as a governing ideology” (Bennouna, 2022). Gender apartheid, like racial apartheid, must be recognized as an international crime, specifically a crime against humanity. In the international legal system, there are currently established categories of violations that prohibit discrimination and persecution on the basis of sex and gender. Those existing statutes and conventions lay the foundational framework for an international convention to deter and criminalize the crime of gender apartheid. The existing conventions and standards on racial apartheid need to be directly applied to gender apartheid.



Syria Earthquake Relief Statement 02/10/2023

We at WLUML are devastated about the level of destruction, injury, and loss of human lives that has resulted from the earthquake that shook parts of Kurdistan, Syria, and Turkey. It is clear that people affected by this natural disaster are in dire need of support, particularly those who are in remote areas and we at WLUML would like to do our part to contribute to the rescue and relief efforts of this tragic disaster.

Day of Education 2023 01/28/23

The Taliban have denied education for girls beyond sixth grade and closed the university doors on women holding their education and human rights as hostages under the guise of sudo-religion to pressure the international community to recognize their government.

Even access to education for young girls is threatened by their wider gender apartheid policies. Girls in fourth to sixth grade, in the Ghazni province, must cover their faces to and from school or face expulsion. The International community must call and take action for the full, equal, and meaningful incorporation of girls and women of Afghanistan in educational processes and remove all obstacles to their equal participation in the nation's public life.

WLUML Wishes You a Peaceful 2023

The events of 2022 were devastating for women's human rights in many Muslim contexts. Yet, throughout the year, women's solidarity has shone through and given us all hope and courage. It is perhaps the solidarity between women from Afghanistan with their Iranian sisters that has been most moving. Women from Afghanistan understand better than anyone else a regime of fear and repression conducted in the name of religion. Risking dispersal by the Taliban, they were there outside the Iranian embassy in Kabul chanting in solidarity for "Woman, Life, Freedom". It is our sincere hope that 2023 will bring greater opportunities for collective work and the sharing of experiences. We look forward to welcoming you in the year and continuing to strive for gender equality and justice together.





Our Plan for 2024



In 2024, WLUML plans to push forward with many of its ongoing projects, including Constitutionalizing Women's Rights (creating the advocacy kit, consultations on the bill of rights for women, awareness-raising of the bill through traditional and social media), Transformational Feminist Leadership Institute (national and regional level curriculum design, first institute execution), Stop Gender Apartheid campaign (lobbying governments and the UN through coalitional and awareness-raising efforts), several research projects (topics include Gender Apartheid, UN Women Machinery, Women reclaiming public spaces etc), launching the up-dated quranic kit as well rebooting WLUML's Love as Politics and Women in Politics projects. WLUML also has activities planned around key international days for advocacy including 16 Days of Activism against GBV, International Peace Day, International Women's Day, International Day of Refugees, World Bicycle Day, and more. WLUML members would also continue their mission of propagating peace, equality, and justice through written and electronic media, as well as in-person appearances in our events and those in solidarity with our partners across the world.

Key themes informing our current work and our continuing plan in 2024 include:



The continuing rise in fundamentalisms and armed conflicts which has had a negative impact on women's rights in the public and private domain, including complete gender apartheid segregation of women from public life as well as the exclusion of women from peace negotiations and peace-building efforts by national and international actors which leads to the overlooking of women's rights, needs, concerns, safety and security in society.



The control of women's bodies (sexual and reproductive rights) including women's lack of basic autonomy of the body and mind, as well as women's insecurity both in the home and public spaces. Especially through the lens of violence against women and the cultural, religious, and legal justifications for gender-based discrimination.



Women's legal status particularly as it relates to family law (personal status law).



Access to power structures and law-making processes where women's political participation is seen as key to women's empowerment, including legal and cultural obstacles to women's political participation both at the national and local levels.



Building a culture of peace-making and respect for diversity.



“This is dedicated to every woman and girl who raises her voice to uplift her suffering sisters around the world. The choice to not build impenetrable walls around your own pain and lean into indifference when it would be easier - and safer - to do so, is deeply admirable.”

Anniesa Hussain
WLUML Council Member



Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is a transnational feminist network that promotes gender justice and equality for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws or customs said to derive from Islam.

The transnational network provides information, solidarity, and support for women acting in their local contexts to advance gender equality. In doing so, WLULM acts as a solidarity network, a think tank, and a lobbying force for local feminist struggles.

Designed, written, and compiled by Maira Asif with contributions from WLUML networkers.

